THE

LABOUR MONTHLY

A MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR

Editor : R. PALME DUTT

Volume 18 January, 1936 Number 1

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

A Landmark of the British Labour Movement — R. P. D.

The Labour Party's Future — WILLIAM RUST

The Miners' Struggle in Notts. — W. L. ELLIS

Thieves' Cant — R. PAGE ARNOT

Iceland and British Imperialism — EINAR OLGEIRSSON

Backward Europe and Progressive Asia — V. I. LENIN

Book Reviews

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NOTES OF THE MONTH

"Soviet Communism"—Bourgeois Reception—Labour Reception—The Great Epilogue—The Background of Fifty Years—Reformism and Marxism—A New Stage—A Symbol of Change—"Decay of Capitalist Civilisation"—First Doubts of Reformism—Labour Governments and Disillusionment—Towards the Soviet Union—A Scientific Inquiry—The Central Achievement—A Work of Popularisation—Masses in Motion—A New Trade Unionism—Real Democracy—"Multiform Democracy"—Exposure of Bourgeois "Freedom"—Brilliant Polemics—"The Western Freedom of the Rich"—The Question of Revolution—Historical Justification—"Liquidation of the Landlord and Capitalist"—The Path of Revolution—Party and Class—The Communist International—The Final Question

A SIGNIFICANT landmark of the present stage of thought and discussion, and of the changes developing in the outlook of the Western labour and socialist movements, is constituted by the appearance of the Webbs' long-awaited volumes on *Soviet Communism : A New Civilisation ?** It is seldom that a book can be said to be a political event ; but in the present case there is reason for such a judgment. We have here the direct confrontation of two poles : on the one side, the reflection of the growing strength and dominance of the new world represented by the Soviet Union and its impact on the ablest and most farseeing thinkers of the old world ; on the other side, a most instructive and interesting final stage of one section of the old school of thought which in the past period has dominated the Western socialist and

**Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation?* By Sidney and Beatrice Webb. Longmans, Green & Co. 2 vols. 35s.

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labour movement, and which now, in the persons of its foremost representatives and virtual founders, has devoted its attention to a sincere and unprejudiced examination of the new world. The product of such a confrontation and survey was bound to be awaited with high anticipation. This anticipation has been more than justified by the event. The appearance of this book may be accounted a definite victory on the front of the world revolution. It is not that we have here a Marxist book, or one whose presentation of soviet institutions and communist conceptions can be accepted at face-value as "the classic" on the subject for which it has been immediately acclaimed in the non-marxist press; on the contrary, there is much, not only in detail points and particular passages, but in the whole approach and underlying conceptions which will appear to the Marxist reader to fall short of complete inner understanding and which can be usefully subjected to critical discussion. But it is precisely this outside approach which gives to the book its distinctive value. The importance of this book lies not merely in its contents—though these are of high value—but in the appearance of these contents by these authors. For herein is expressed the historical outcome of a whole chapter of the international labour movement.

IT is to the undying honour of its authors that this culminating outcome of a lifetime's labour has aroused howls of rage from the bourgeoisie and the reactionary official leadership of the labour movement. With a pen dipped in bitterness the *Times* writes (November 25, 1935):

> Is this the last word of these two great figures in the history of our English thought, in their honoured age? If so, it is a sad word. They have said good-bye to the free life of the human spirit, and they beckon us onwards and downwards to the expert and automatic polity of—the bee.

The organ of the bourgeoisie understands well enough the doom of their order expressed in this "last word" of these "two great figures," who have had the courage, refusing to let their recognition of facts to be coloured by their reformist theories not only to face with undimmed eyes the world's future,

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but to see and recognise its present growth in the midst of conflict and calumny, and even to a certain degree to range themselves upon its side. There could be no more noble epitaph on this crowning stage of work of these two pioneers than this snarl of hatred from the bourgeoisie, replacing the former praise, just as the fulsome eulogies from the same source for a MacDonald are the fitting epitaph on the philosophy that he has consistently preached and practised to its final humiliating conclusion.

NO less indicative, and honourable to the authors, is the ferocious onslaught of the official Labour organ, the *Daily Herald*, through the pen of a Citrine (November 28, 1935):

> There is scarcely a chapter which will not evoke criticism. They, like most visitors who have tried to penetrate the barrage of Soviet propaganda, have been hampered by the absence of familiarity with the Russian language and of that intimate knowledge of the lives of the people which can only be attained by long residence. . . . . The Webbs come to the somewhat remarkable conclusion that the Soviet system is not a dictatorship. . . . . What the Webbs set out to prove is that the Constitution is democratic. . . . . They regard the Trade Unions as voluntary and independent organisations. . . . . Altogether, there is much material in this book which goes far to justify the methods of Mussolini and Hitler.

Thus, these patiently argued and exhaustively documented conclusions of these most distinguished trained investigators in the English-speaking world are swept aside with a wave of the hand by this pigmy of official reaction because the results do not accord with the ready-made prejudices and dogmas of Labour anti-communist propaganda ; and even the stock gibe of "justifying the methods of Mussolini and Hitler," the senseless identifying of support of proletarian democracy and support of Fascism, is indulged in by this insolent neophyte of reformism against the Webbs.

FOR themselves, with disarming and ironic modesty the authors present in their Preface the significance of this work in relation to their life's achievement :

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> The question will arise in some quarters: Why did two aged mortals, both nearing their ninth decade, undertake a work of such magnitude? We fear our presumption must be ascribed to the recklessness of old age. In our retirement, with daily bread secured, we had nothing to lose by the venture—not even our reputation, which will naturally stand or fall upon our entire output of the last half-century, to the load of which one more book makes no appreciable difference. On the other hand, we had a world to gain—a new subject to investigate; a fresh circle of stimulating acquaintances with whom to discuss entirely new topics. . . . . This world we have gained and enjoyed. To use a theological term, this book is therefore to be received as a work of supererogation, which, as we understand it, means something not required, but spontaneously offered. . . . . Or, to take a humbler analogy, it may be taken as the etcetera, often thrown in as a gift by the salesman with a package of goods already paid for. As such we may present it unabashed to our British and American readers.

"We had nothing to lose—we had a world to gain." The ironic echo of the Marxist formula of proletarian liberation rings through this quaint passage of self-depreciation. With the freedom of "retirement," of work accomplished, of "reputation" unassailable, they make this crowning offering "unabashed" to the British-American public, who may have previously bought the goods of the Webb brand, "already paid for," of a different type, and now receive unasked "not required, but spontaneously offered," this little "etcetera" which is "thrown in as a gift," like a final comment forming a tailpiece at the end of the long parade of all their works. The fantasy does not fail to hit its mark. For in truth "Soviet Communism" is the Great Epilogue, which constitutes henceforth the indispensable comment, the anticipation of the comment of history by the authors themselves, even though its conclusions are but partly drawn, on all the previous work of the Webbs.

IN order to estimate the full significance of this work it is necessary to see it in its historical focus. It is exactly half-a-century since Sidney Webb began his political career as an active member of the newly-formed Fabian Society; it is nearly half-a-century since *Fabian Essays*. This half-century

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has seen the great division of the international working-class movement between two wings, reformist and Marxist. Reformism, challenging the dominant Marxism that followed the First International, grew up in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in Western Europe and America, and won its dominant position in the movement in these regions in the first quarter of the twentieth century. As both its period and its regional character clearly indicate, reformism was essentially a reflection of imperialism ; it built on the outlook of the privileged minority of the proletariat and salaried workers in the tribute-drawing centres of imperialism, regarding these peculiar and temporary conditions as the normal expression of progressive social evolution, and on this basis rejecting the " crude " Marxist theories of class-war and of the necessity of revolution, expropriation and dictatorship as the path to socialism.

WHILE it would be a mistake to attribute so widespread a tendency and expression of a specific set of social conditions to a single source, it may be said that the clearest, the most consistently worked out, and the earliest worked out expression of this alternative line to Marxism was Fabianism, or the theory elaborated by the Webbs since the later eighties. Fabianism was the central stream which later spread through the rest of Europe as Revisionism. Revisionism only began with Bernstein's book in 1899, ten years after *Fabian Essays*, and after Bernstein had spent a number of years in London and sat at the feet of the Webbs. Further, Revisionism endeavoured to mask its essential character under a form of acceptance of Marxism, claiming only " revision " of Marxism, or " freedom of discussion " against " orthodoxy " (just as some of our modern so-called " Marxists " love to do to-day, utilising this very ancient stratagem as a supposedly modern approach), and concealing until later its basic opposition to Marxism. Fabianism, on the contrary, was a completely honest and conscious expression of the fight against Marxism ; in the words of its official history, " its first achievement was to break the spell of Marxism in England " (Pease : *History of the Fabian Society*, 1925, p. 236). It was the open and direct expression

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of the most progressive wing of the bourgeoisie, seeking to take in hand the rising workers' movement and guide it along the path of peaceful reform within the existing structure in place of policies of class struggles and revolution. Aided by the strength of British imperialism and the superior manœuvring ability of its leaders, Fabianism succeeded to defeat the very weak exponents of Marxism in England in guiding the policy of the Labour Movement. So far as such a position may be ascribed to any individuals, the Webbs may be said to be the true founders and classic theorists of Reformism on an international scale, of the whole policy that has found expression in the post-war Second International.

TO-DAY, on the basis of decades of experience, we are reaching to a new stage in this old controversy. The way is opening out to a healing of the division that for a generation has split the working-class movement. Experience has now shown on a gigantic plane the working out of the two paths in the geographical division of the two halves of Europe. On the one side, the path of bourgeois-democratic reform and class-co-operation has led, not to advance to socialism, but to the dominance of extreme reaction, enlarging economic crisis, bloody war and preparation for war, and in the culminating stage fascism, or the most terrible form of class-war in which the whip of oppression is exercised against a proletariat disarmed and paralysed by reformism and the theories of class peace. On the other side, the path of revolutionary class struggle has led, through struggle and hardship, to the triumph of socialism over one-sixth of the earth and the beginning of a new life of plenty, freedom and creation for all the masses, such as is now beginning to arouse the wonder and admiration of all but the most hidebound reactionaries throughout the world.

THE lesson has driven deep. Within the camp of the old Second International a transformation is taking place. The advance to the united front with Communism is now winning the support of the majority of the parties in the Second International. The masses in the countries where reformism has dominated, and the most honest

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elements in the leadership, begin more and more to turn their eyes to the example of the Soviet Union as the working model, the fortress and the hope of Socialism, and to seek to learn the new lessons for the struggle. The Communists, recognising the great change that is taking place, fateful for the whole future of the working class, anxious above all that no difficulties from their side or memories of old feuds shall stand in the way, are holding out the hand of comradeship. In this situation it is something more than a symptom, it is a symbolical expression of a great historical turning point that the Webbs, the classic theorists of reformism, have turned aside from all the previous groundwork of their activity to devote their culminating working years to the study and popularisation of " Soviet Communism " as the " new civilisation " of the future world society.

UNTIL 1914 it may be said that Fabianism and the Webbs were still fully confident, even aggressively confident, that they had found the path of progress and that such manifestations of revolutionary and Marxist theories as they came across were in essence osbolete romantic lumber with no application to modern realities. The world war gave them their first shock. The 1919 Preface to *Fabian Essays* for the first time stressed the limited, it might even be said parochial, character of their previous thinking and the failure to " think internationally " (" A more general shortcoming was our failure to think internationally . . . . we had none of us given attention either to the continental socialist movements or to international relations.") The mighty revolutionary wave after the war and the shaking of the whole capitalist structure shook their whole thought and the previous easy assumptions still more profoundly. After having written for thirty years about the " Parish and the County," " Statutory Authorities for Special Purposes," the " History of Trade Unionism," " The Relief of the Poor and the Repression of Vagrancy," the " Public Organisation of the Labour Market," etc., etc., they for the first time wrote an entirely new kind of book—about capitalism in general.

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THE Decay of Capitalist Civilisation appeared in 1923. In it for the first time the note of doubt of the whole reformist policy appeared:

> For over thirty years our time and energy have been devoted to municipal administration, to research into the facts of social organisation, and to devising and advocating measures by which the existing profit-making system may be replaced with the least political friction and the most considerate treatment of "established expectations." . . . . Before the Great War there seemed to be a substantial measure of consent that the social order had to be gradually changed in the direction of a greater equality in material income and personal freedom. . . . . *We thought, perhaps wrongly*, that this characteristic British acquiescence on the part of a limited governing class in the rising claims of those who had found themselves excluded both from enjoyment and control would continue to be extended, willingly or reluctantly, still further from the political into the industrial sphere; and that while progress might be slow, there would at least be no reaction.

This deeply significant "We thought, perhaps wrongly" is extracted by the honest facing of the facts:

> Worse things than any citizen thought possible ten years ago have happened and are still happening daily.

The capitalist dictatorship negating democracy is admitted:

> The peculiar kind of tyranny now exercised even in the most advanced political democracies by a relatively small class of rich men over a mass of poor men (p. xv.). Seeing that no individual owner recognises himself as a dictator, let it be at once added that the dictatorship is a class dictatorship.

The class war is seen as growing in intensity:

> The twentieth century found the feeling of a class war—of an irreconcilable cleavage of interest between the "two nations" in each land—rapidly spreading to nearly every section of the wage earners, in practically all countries in which the capitalist system had become dominant. . . . . To stave off this extremity of social disaster the Italian bourgeoisie are arming themselves to subjugate the proletariat by open violence.

The final plea for class peace with which the book ends has lost all the old confidence and is shot through with the deepest pessimism and scepticism:

> In an attempt, *possibly vain*, to make the parties understand their problem and each other better—in the hope that it is not always

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> inevitable that Nature should harden the hearts of those whom she intends to destroy—we offer this little work.

To this stage the Webbs—whose distinctive mark in the camp of reformism has always been their open-eyed sincerity to face the objective facts as they saw them—had reached already in 1923, twelve years ago.

YET one hope remained to them, the hope that through a Labour Government the way forward might be found to peaceful social change in England. In 1923, Sidney Webb declared in his Chairman's Address to the Labour Party Conference :

> A continuation of the rising curve of Labour votes . . . would produce a clear majority of the total votes cast in Great Britain somewhere about 1926.

Once again reality dealt a hard, but profoundly instructive, answer to these hopes. 1926 saw, not the dreamed-of Labour majority, but the General Strike, the first clear pointer of the future British revolution. The two Labour Governments of 1924 and 1929 were minority Governments under the leadership of MacDonald. Webb took part in both. He was compelled to witness, not only how both Labour Governments could make no advance even to a beginning of social change, but how the economic crisis of capitalism had to be left to develop unchecked, and was presently to involve the Labour Government in discredit and the Labour Party in a heavy electoral disaster. On his experience in these two Governments, and the conclusions to be drawn, he has maintained a marked silence in his published writings. There are reasons to believe that the disillusionment, not only with the immediate experience of the Labour Governments, but with the whole prospect of the Labour Party under its existing leadership, was a heavy one. A shifting of interest and development to a new stage followed. It was from this point that the Webbs began to develop an increasingly active interest in and close study of the Soviet Union, leading up to the appearance of *Soviet Communism* in 1935—an achievement which in range, exhaustiveness, freshness of outlook and vitality is surely without parallel in two authors " both nearing their ninth decade."

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IT is important to note at the outset that the Webbs approached their subject of *Soviet Communism* as scientific investigators, and not with any predilections in its favour. On the contrary, so far as they had made previous references to the questions involved, while in general they had maintained a cautious silence on the questions in controversy and abstained from polemics, such references as they had occasionally made indicated that they shared the prevalent views and even misconceptions of the Labour Party and reformist leadership. The typical view of Fabianism had been expressed in the official *History of the Fabian Society :*

> This is not the place to discuss the disasters which have befallen the Russian people since the Communist Party came into power. . . . In the mists which cover the political path of that great people, one thing seems to be clear, that the Communist Policy has proved a failure, and that under the guidance of Lenin until his death the Russian Government has been retracing its steps, building up again the capitalist institutions which it had recklessly destroyed. (E. R. Pease : *History of the Fabian Society*, 1925. p. 269.)

To-day, after ten years *Soviet Communism* provides the comment on this (p. 546) :

> It was, we suggest, mere " wish-fulfilment " that the whole world outside the U.S.S.R., together with all the opponents of the Bolsheviks inside the U.S.S.R., acclaimed the New Economic Policy as both confession and proof of the failure of collectivism. Nearly every one assumed that any further pursuit of the policy of liquidating the landlord and the capitalist had been abandoned. Yet Lenin made it abundantly clear that it was, as he said, only a case of taking one step backward in order to be able to take two steps forward.

A PARTIAL echo of this old " disaster " view is to be found in the letter of Beatrice Webb to Seaham working women in 1927 (reprinted in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* of July 8, 1927) :

> The Russian Revolution, and especially the propaganda of it in Great Britain, has been the greatest disaster in the history of the British Labour Movement. Just as the French Revolution in 1789-93 kept back the advent of political democracy in England for a couple of generations, so the Russian Revolution of 1917 may, if we are not careful, prove to keep back the advent of economic democracy in England for half-a-century.

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In the *Decay of Capitalist Civilisation* (1923) the "incapacity for democratic institutions—for the trade union or professional organisations as well as for political democracy" is illustrated by a reference to Russia (p. 83), and we find similarly the passage (p. 161):

> Under the ruthless and corrupt autocracy of Russia with its complete exclusion of the town workers and peasants from participation in the Government, the leaders of the Bolshevik or "majority" section of the socialist movement, when suddenly loaded with the responsibility of government by the revolution of 1917, were forced to abandon all pretence of democracy and establish the "dictatorship of the proletariat," which was certainly a dictatorship, but under it, as before, the proletariat was dictated to.

These extracts, which may be regarded as fully revised to-day by the conclusions of the scientific investigations of *Soviet Communism*, are only of importance to disprove the common allegations of the bourgeois reviewers that the Webbs approached their subject, not as scientific investigators, but with favourable preconceptions which coloured their approach. On the contrary, so far as there were any preconceptions, they were those current among the hostile leading circles of the Labour Party and the Second International; and only the impartial scientific investigation dispelled the prejudices and compelled the wholehearted recognition of the real facts which are still startling to the bourgeois and bourgeois-labour outlook.

WHAT, then, are these conclusions which have thus aroused the anger and hatred of the bourgeoisie and of the reactionary sections of the labour and trade union leadership? Just these circles have in the past been accustomed to accept without question the unrivalled scientific authority of the Webbs as trained and responsible investigators. Yet to-day they are up in arms. Here we come to the central achievement of their book and its significance. It is not that their conclusions taken in their most general character, are new in principle to those already acquainted with the outlook of Communism and with the realities of the soviet order, as these have been developing for nearly two decades. For these it may rather be noted that, in the exhaustive range of this

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survey over every field, no one, even the most expert, can fail to learn much that is new in detail and of the highest value. But what is new for the widest public is that these conclusions, these general principles, characteristics, aims and life of soviet democracy are here set out and inescapably proved for the first time, not as subjective impressions or theoretical principles, but on the basis of a full survey of objective facts, with such a wealth of completeness, living detail and illustrative example, meeting and dispelling in the broad sweep of the argument all the thousand-and-one idle scepticisms, criticisms and misconceptions which still commonly block the view, that it is impossible for any impartial reader after a careful reading to fail to be fully convinced of the essential truth of this living picture of a new and higher form of democracy in being.

THIS concrete picture will win conviction in many quarters where the current communist generalisations fail to reach ; and it is the more effective for its purpose because it is presented throughout from the basis of the outlook of the " enlightened general public " of the existing Western world, knows its audience, knows their difficulties, prejudices and habits of thought, and is able again and again with extreme sureness of touch to give explanations that are needed or to clear away legends and misconceptions. It is thus, not simply a great scientific work (although in its analysis of the constitution it has also this character), but above all a great work of " popularisation." At the same time the scientific training of the Webbs, not in respect of theory (here they are often at sea and on a somewhat amateurish level of discussion), but in the actual investigation of administrative forms and the working of social institutions, has enabled them to see and recognise the importance of far more than is commonly seen by non-communist observers.

WHAT have they seen ? First and most important of all, they have seen the *mass character* of the new social order ; they have seen the masses in motion, shaping their own lives in a way that has never happened before

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in history, as the key and centre of the new proletarian régime on its way to the classless society. This is the biggest thing of all ; and yet it is what many even sympathetic liberal observers still more the hostile ones, most often miss. These commonly see what they call the great " socialist experiment " ; they see a picture of the devoted " Communist rulers " heroically remaking the country and bringing new life and culture to the masses ; and they bring back reports as of a benevolent socialism from above which they either praise with delight or alternatively fear that the " loss of liberty " is too great a price for these admitted material and cultural benefits. But the reality they do not see. Here the scientific training of the Webbs in observing comparatively the actual working of social institutions has stood them in good stead. They could not fail to see the significance of such a fact for municipal administration as that " apart from such salaried staff as exists, as many as 50,000 citizens are at any moment participating in the municipal administration of Moscow, and nearly as many in that of Leningrad " (p. 58) ; that 70,000 village councils are enjoying an " unprecedented freedom, without such safeguards as prior enquiry and sanction, a statutory maximum for local expenditure and a limit to local taxation " (p. 31) ; " every public department is in fact genuinely eager to stir all the 70,000 village soviets into the utmost public activity " (p. 30) ; that, again apart from salaried staff, three million trade union members are at any time actively engaged in the 186,640 factory committees and shop committees and their sub-committees, so that " apart from the officers, paid and unpaid, at least 15 per cent. of the trade union members are actively engaged in committee work " (p. 177) ; that of the gigantic electorate of 91 millions (" by far the largest voting body in the world," p. 17), no less than 85 per cent. take direct part, not merely in the sense of casting a vote, but directly participating in meetings and discussions lasting over many hours and sometimes over successive days.

SIMILARLY for their understanding of the key rôle of the trade unions. After disposing of the Citrine-*Daily Herald* legend that the trade unions are not voluntary

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organisations by the simple and conclusive demonstration that as recently as September, 1934, the Secretary of the All-Union Central Committee of Trade Unions " complained that 22 per cent. of all those employed for wages or salary in the U.S.S.R. were outside the trade unions," and that union organisation among the state farm workers had still only reached 49 per cent. among the railway construction workers 61 per cent., and even among the building trades workers only 74 per cent., and among the miners 77 per cent. (p. 175), they proceed to show the new rôle of the trade unions in relation to production, the control of industry and all the conditions of life of their members when there is no longer a profit-making class in possession and the state is the workers' own state. They conclude in a passage of exceptional interest from the authors of the classic : *History of Trade Unionism :*

> It seems to us clear that, in the great industrial establishments that have for half-a-century been characteristic of Russian industry, the eighteen millions of trade unionists, whilst not actually entrusted with the management of their several industries, do control to a very large extent, in their constant consultation with the management and with all the organs of government, the conditions of their employment—their hours of labour, the exercise of factory discipline, the safety and amenity of their places of work, and the sharing among themselves of the proportion of the product that they agree should be allocated to personal wages. In like manner the trade unions not only control, but actually manage by their own committees, the disposition of that other part of the product which they agree should be allocated to the whole range of social insurances, education, medical attendance, holidays, and organised recreation of all kinds. . . . . The influence upon every organ of government of the eighteen million trade unionists is immeasurably great (p. 302).

The similar examination through the whole range of the agricultural collectives, the co-operatives, the party and the youth organisations, etc., leads to the picture of a society marked by " the personal participation in public affairs of an unprecedented proportion of the entire adult population " (p. 450).

THIS understanding leads directly to the greatest achievement of their whole book, that *they have demonstrated on a gigantic canvas the reality of the dictatorship of the*

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proletariat as a new and higher form of democracy. This is the achievement which has above all aroused the wrath of all their bourgeois and Labour critics. They directly throw down the challenge to the old abstract shibboleth, which constitutes the alpha and omega of official Labour wisdom on the question of Communism, the cant formula of " dictatorship versus democracy." " Can we wisely limit our enquiries," they ask, " by such alternatives as ' aristocracy, oligarchy and democracy ' or ' dictatorship versus democracy ' ? " (p. 450). Their conclusions are the more remarkable since they frankly confess that they do not understand in principle what is meant by " the dictatorship of the proletariat " ; they ask, if it means " no more than the rule of an immense majority over a minority, why should it be termed a dictatorship ? " (The answer may be suggested that it is precisely the ruthless dictatorship against the exploiting minority, robbing them of their power customary in bourgeois democracy to nullify the abstract democratic forms, which makes possible the real democracy of the masses ; and in consequence we have a real self-rule of the masses, under the leadership of the working class and its party, in contrast to the abstract deceitful " majority rule " of bourgeois democracy or of the still more patent plebiscitary humbugs of fascism.)

BUT while the theory remains uncleared, they see with firm grasp the realities. With painstaking care they discuss and dismiss the allegations of autocracy, dictatorship by a party (" the term dictatorship is surely a misnomer for this untiring corporate inspiration, evocation and formulation of a General Will among so huge a population " (p. 430), or dictatorship by an individual or group of individuals ; the government is " the very opposite of a dictatorship " (p. 436).

> Our own conclusion is that, if by autocracy or dictatorship is meant government without prior discussion and debate, either by public opinion or in private session, the government of the U.S.S.R. is in that sense actually less of an autocracy or a dictatorship than many a parliamentary cabinet (p. 449).

The definition is thus reached of the true constitution of the U.S.S.R. as being that of a common social aim (a " creedocracy ") inspiring :

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> a multiform democracy in which soviets and trade unions, co-operative societies and voluntary associations provide for the personal participation in public affairs of an unprecedented proportion of the entire adult population.

Or again :

> In short, the U.S.S.R. is a government instrumented by all the adult inhabitants, organised in a varied array of collectives, having their several distinct functions, and among them carrying on with a strangely new "political economy" nearly the whole wealth production of the country (p. 450).

If we compare this with the old-fashioned definition of democracy as "government of the people by the people for the people," it is impossible to fail to be struck how completely this new description of the U.S.S.R. by the Webbs exactly expresses the realisation of this for the first time in history, not as a phrase, but as a reality.

THUS the great *pons asinorum* of "dictatorship versus democracy" which awaits every bourgeois and reformist inquirer into the Soviet Union and proves the undoing of so many, has in this way been surmounted for the reader of the Webbs with rare skill, not by the aid of Marxist theory (had they had this, they would have been Communists from the beginning and would not have needed the blackboard example of the Soviet Union to prove it), but on the basis of the objective facts now visible to all. But this observation of the facts leads them to results of real theoretical value. For the contrast of the Soviet Union leads them to a most powerful exposure of bourgeois "freedom" in the United Kingdom and the capitalist world in general (especially pp. 1029-1037). Here they prove themselves real fighters and polemists. Against the myths of the academic economists, with their claims of the supposed "freedom of choice" of the consumer in the capitalist world, they answer with the crushing weight of facts. :

> It takes a little reflection for even a trained economist to realise that the vast majority of the commodities displayed in the public markets or in the shops of the London streets are as *effectively forbidden to two-thirds of all the inhabitants of England as if this large majority were statutorily prohibited from purchasing them* (p. 692)

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And here it may be noted incidentally that they conduct a brilliant battle against all the modern schools of bourgeois economists (Hayek, Mises, Gregory, etc.) who endeavour with a thousand lame arguments to " refute " the Soviet demonstration of the superiority of Socialism and bankruptcy of capitalist organisation. For an example of refreshing sharp humour in this polemic may be quoted the passage :

> There is one school of economists, which has adherents in all the western countries, who do not trouble to dispute the actual achievements of the planned economy of the U.S.S.R., because they claim to possess a science according to which these achievements are logically impossible (p. 671).

AS for " freedom of opinion," their treatment of the realities in Britain is incisive :

> Let us take, to begin with, the position of the schools and the teachers. So far as concerns nine-tenths of the children of school age in Great Britain their parents have no freedom of choice as to schools or teacher or curriculum. The teachers are equally obliged to adopt, as the basis of their instruction of their pupils, and even of their intimate conversations with them, the fundamental conceptions of the national civilisation, such as constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy, British Imperialism, the capitalist organisation of industry, and a conventional Christianity. In no part of the country could a teacher in a public elementary school keep his (or her) job, however sincere and fervent his belief, if he was known to inculcate atheism, communism, the abolition of parliament, republicanism or the dissolution of the British Empire (p. 1029).

Or again :

> It is habitually forgotten how numerous and extensive are the classes to whom, in Great Britain among other countries, freedom of expression of opinions unpleasing to the government, or to the majority of the citizens, is denied, either formally by regulation, or informally by the danger of losing their means of livelihood (p. 1030).

On the basis of their examination of the facts they reach the inescapable conclusion that it is not the question of " freedom," but the question of *which class rules*, that determines the difference between the capitalist world and the soviet world :

> For the individual citizen the propaganda is as inescapable in the one case as the other. In all countries his mind is bludgeoned to

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compel him to admit a whole series of ideas. *Where systems differ is in who wields the bludgeon and with what purpose* (p. 1032).

At the same time the development of the U.S.S.R. is laying the indispensable material basis for the maximum " individual freedoms " :

> Assuming that the increase in wealth production and in population continue at their present compound rates, it seems likely that in the course of two or three decades the U.S.S.R. will have become the wealthiest country in the world, and at the same time the community enjoying the greatest aggregate of individual freedoms (p. 1037).

THEIR anger and contempt is especially vehement against the illusions of freedom of the " wealthy intellectuals " in the Western world. In a magnificent footnote they castigate the lucubrations of H. G. Wells on the Soviet Union as " only one more instance of the incurable blindness of the wealthy intellectual " (p. 1037). Their passage on " The Western Freedom of the Rich " deserves to become a classic :

> To the educated intellectual of the western world (especially if he enjoys a rentier income, or can earn adequate fees or royalties from a succession of clients, to none of whom he is beholden) the foregoing argument will appear mere sophistry. It is amazing how blind we can be to the living conditions to which the vast majority of our fellow citizens are subjected, if we are ourselves in other circumstances. If he is not trammelled by wearing a crown or by membership of the court circle, and not enmeshed in the obligations of a landed estate or active participation in business, the intellectual well-to-do citizen of London or New York can surround himself exclusively with books of his own choice ; can subscribe only to the newspaper which he dislikes least ; can amuse himself expensively without going to the cinema that he despises ; can attend the church that he finds congenial or none at all if he so prefers ; can travel in the countries that are to his taste, or " follow the sun " so as to live always in the climate that suits his bodily comfort. Very naturally he becomes as little conscious of the circumambient mental environment that coerces his less fortunate fellow citizens as he is of the weight of the atmosphere—to the influence of which even he is at all times irresistibly subjected. Of course he is not by any means as free as he thinks he is.

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The thrust goes home for all the Russells, Wells, Huxleys, Joads, Delisle Burns, etc., from whom official Labourism has tended to draw its theoretical outlook.

THIS brings us to the central question of the whole controversy of reformism and Marxism—the question of *revolution*, and the light that the Webbs' new book throws on the understanding of this issue. After an examination, in the chapter entitled " The Liquidation of the Landlord and the Capitalist," of the costs of the revolution and the civil war in respect of human suffering, violence and conflict, and an instructive comparison with the costs of the bourgeois revolution in Britain and, still more, of the realities of the bourgeois régime, not merely in the metropolitan centre of Britain, which is too often falsely taken as the basis of comparison, but in the British Empire as a whole, they reach the general conclusion :

> We may safely conclude, from the common experience of mankind, that whenever in any country there takes place a great redistribution of power among groups or classes, a new destination will be given to existing wealth, especially that in the form of ownership of the means of production. If that new destination is forcibly resisted by the old possessors, there has always been fighting ; and both during and after the fighting, more or less " terrorism " by those who prove to be the stronger and who regard this as the only means of destroying or maintaining the social revolution that is occurring. This fighting and " terrorism " and the misery to which it leads are, as it seems to the present writers, strong reasons in favour of proceeding as far as possible by general goodwill (p. 600).

" As far as possible "—but the possibility is no longer very confidently indicated.

THEY further conclude that the decisive question on the issue of revolution is not the abstract question of violence, or the supposed avoidance of suffering through leaving the old régime in possession, but the value of the new social order that is created :

> Future generations will estimate the worthwhileness of national conquests or internal revolutions, not so much by the temporary misery that they inevitably create, but largely according to the

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> relative social value, in each case, of the new order in comparison with the old. / In the U.S.S.R. the substantial completion of the liquidation of the landlord and capitalist, together with the coincident abandonment by the western powers of their original project of armed intervention to suppress Soviet Communism, have not only made humanity to individuals at last socially safe, but have also witnessed a considerable building-up of new social tissue, and the purposeful reorganisation of community life on a deliberate plan for the Remaking of Man (p. 601).

This is already a very important modification of the old abstract anti-revolutionary outlook, and constitutes the germ of a recognition of the Marxist conception.

IT is a factor making for strength of this account as a whole of the soviet order that one of the twelve chapters is devoted thus specifically to "The Liquidation of the Landlord and the Capitalist" as the indispensable basis of the whole construction and positive realisation of the new life. Without the prior destruction there can be no construction. This is the basis of revolutionary understanding. And although the full significance of this is not yet drawn by the Webbs on an international scale (they can still write: "Socialism and communism have passed beyond the stage of mere rebellion, easily to be confused with anarchism. The Soviet Government has come to a position of commanding influence in world affairs. Socialist administrations are actually in office in several other countries," etc. (p. 1116) without realising that "the liquidation of the landlord and the capitalist" has not yet taken place in these other countries of so-called "socialist administrations," and therefore the essential task in these countries is still the task of the "rebellion," *i.e.*, the conquest of power); nevertheless, this lesson stands out implicitly from their whole account as the most important lesson of the whole experience of the soviet régime in contrast to the bankruptcy of the capitalist countries with or without "socialist administrations." And it is interesting to note that just this lesson has struck most powerfully an acute Liberal reader, Sir Ernest Simon, the foremost housing expert in Britain, who writes with enthusiasm of the new light opening out before him from a reading of the Webbs' book

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(*New Statesman and Nation*, December 14, 1935) saying "I believe this to be the most important book on political and economic matters which I have ever read," and declares with reference to his own experience:

> The most important aspect for us in England is undoubtedly the new economic and industrial system. We talk a great deal about planning in this country; but our planning is a constant fight against vested interests. Town planning and housing would be relatively easy if we could act on the advice of our best experts. In fact, the satisfactory rehousing of the people is thwarted at every turn by the dreary and unending fight against people whose personal interests would be damaged if we did the right thing. All this friction is abolished in Russia.

Yes: "all this friction is abolished in Russia"—because the landlord and capitalist is liquidated. In other words, the central problem to-day in the capitalist countries is not technical and administrative; it is the problem of power, of the conquest of power.

IT would be asking too much of the Webbs to expect that, while the historical significance of the revolution once accomplished is fully recognised, there should be the same clearness of understanding of the path leading to the success of the revolution, of the struggle for power, through which alone the subsequent constructive achievement was made possible. Their interest is rather in the fruits of the revolution than in the revolutionary struggle, in the positive work of construction rather than how the construction was made possible. To ask more than this would be to demand, not merely observation of existing facts, but Marxist theory. It is inevitable that in these questions the absence of Marxist theory should show through. Hence, the noticeable weakness in the short sketch of the history of the revolution (in chapter vii. and other passages) of the rôle of the party before and in the revolution, of the character of the March revolution, of the attitude of Lenin to the bourgeois democratic and socialist revolutions, to the slogans of the Constituent Assembly and Soviet Power, etc., all of which show an attempt to travel on unfamiliar ground and fall markedly below the level of the rest of the book. Here the lack of any

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clear social theory of class forces, *i.e.*, of Marxism, prevents a scientific approach.

IN particular, the relation of the party to the class is not clearly seen. The party to-day in the Soviet Union is described with the warmest appreciation and admiration of its key rôle in the whole structure ; but it is described throughout, both before and after the revolution, as a " companionship," an " order," " a Vocation of Leadership," comparable to Wells' utopian theory of an " Order of the Samurai," a kind of classless élite leading the proletariat :

> In Lenin's view the socialist revolution could be carried into effect only by the long continued efforts of a relatively small highly disciplined and absolutely united party of professional revolutionists acting persistently on the minds of what he called the proletariat (p. 442).
>
> It is interesting to recall that essentially such a Vocation of Leadership, termed the Order of the Samurai, was suggested by Mr. H. G. Wells in 1905, in his book entitled *A Modern Utopia* (p. 1131).

Here the class-roots of the party are ignored and even denied ; its real character is not grasped as the revolutionary section of the working class in respect of the decisive basis of its membership, the union of the most clear-headed, fighting workers, bound by a hundred ties to their fellow workers, integrally part of the working class, and therefore alone able to lead and fulfil its social rôle. This necessarily leads to a weakness in seeing the driving forces of the revolution and the path of the conquest of power.

HENCE also necessarily follows the collapse of understanding in relation to the Communist International, which is regarded as a disastrous error in conflict with the essential purpose of the Soviet Union and a contradiction to the peace policy of the Soviet Union. Here, a fuller study of the writings of Lenin and of Stalin might have brought a closer understanding, even if still with disagreement, of the outlook of the leaders of the Soviet Union. But this failure also necessarily follows from the sharp and abstract separation of the work of construction from the indispensable prior work

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of destruction. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is seen with close sympathy and admiration, because it is engaged to-day on the work of construction. The other Communist Parties are seen with a condescending and depreciatory eye, not only because they are smaller, but above all because they are engaged in the task of "mere rebellion." So follows the suggestion that it would be better to form an International of "socialist or communist statesmen and municipal administrators" (*i.e.*, an International of Stalin and Vandervelde, of Molotov and Morrison, as representing common interests, but excluding Thaelmann and Dimitrov), since it is "not practicable to combine for political purposes the representatives of governments with those of agitational groups, many of them 'illegal'" (p. 1117). In this proposal we see the consequence of the absence of any class basis of outlook.

WE must not complain of these lacunæ of understanding in spheres outside the main scope of the book. The Webbs frankly confess at the end that, while they feel the victory of World Communism to be inevitable, they do not see clearly how it is going to be achieved :

> At this point we hear an interested reader asking "Will it spread?" Will this new civilisation, with its abandonment of the incentive of profit-making, its extinction of unemployment, its planned production for community consumption, and the consequent liquidation of the landlord and the capitalist spread to other countries? Our own reply is: "Yes, it will." But how, when, where, with what modifications, and whether through violent revolution or by peaceful penetration, or even by conscious imitation, are questions we cannot answer (p. 1143).

With these words the book ends. It is for others to answer in practice the questions which the authors leave unanswered. Marxism teaches that that practice can only be realised through the action of the working class along the path of the revolutionary class struggle, in other words, through the path of the Communist International. We have the same confidence in the correctness of that answer for the rest of the world as the Bolsheviks had before their revolution, to which confidence incidentally the Webbs attribute no small part of their victory

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(p. 947). History has given the first great demonstration of the correctness of that answer by the Bolshevik Revolution ; it will give the next through the further development of the world revolution in the years before us. But we must always remember that we can only finally prove the correctness of that answer in the battle ; and we must not be surprised if those who do not share our outlook will only join us after we have won the victory.

R. P. D.

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THE LABOUR PARTY'S FUTURE

By WILLIAM RUST

THE leaders of the Labour Party have held their inquest on the General Election defeat—but the dominant note is complacency and a feeling that the Party should now settle down to a nice quiet General Election in 1940. There is very little recognition of what might have been achieved and many of the conclusions are both wildly divorced from realities and extremely harmful for future policy.

The *Daily Herald* led the way with its proclamation of the consoling fact that the Labour Party's total poll is approximately the same as 1929. This is true, but no advance in six years is scarcely a comforting discovery to advertise. In any case, this aggregate poll must not be allowed to cover up the disagreeable fact that in comparison with 1929 many important industrial areas and big towns (Birmingham, Liverpool, Newcastle, Salford, Lancashire cotton towns, etc.) do not even show as-you-were, but a state of decline.

A correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* makes the following interesting comment on the voting figures :

> Taking 1929 as the standard it would appear that the Labour poll increased mainly in two classes of constituency—the mining areas which are Labour already (or were only temporarily deflected in 1931) and the rural and semi-rural constituencies of the South, which are the strongholds of Toryism and have large Tory majorities. In the urban industrial constituencies, both in those which Labour holds and in those it has still to win, 1935 was, on the whole, a much worse year than 1929. (November 19, 1935.)

It is necessary to draw sharp attention to this failure to rally the workers, especially as the dominant leaders of the Labour Party are ignoring this alarming and warning fact and deliberately putting the whole question of working-class action into the background. Millions of workers have placed and continue to place all their hopes on the election of a Labour Government in Britain. But after this Election who will dare to prophesy when and how such a Government will come ? Herbert Morrison tells us that " Keir Hardie had a bigger job in front of him " and that " it took us twenty years to get a majority on the London County Council," but we must remind the complacent Morrison that we are not now in the early days of the Labour movement.

This is 1935, *not* 1892 *!* To-day, we are menaced by war and fascism, our fight is a race against time. To-day, we must face the fact that

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the Labour Party suffered a débâcle in 1931 because of its refusal to fight capitalism and that even by 1935 it has not recovered its 1929 voting strength amongst the working class. We must understand that the fight for a Labour Government is a fight against capitalism in crisis, against capitalists who are desperately afraid of working-class militancy and what a Labour Government might do. The two previous Labour Governments were minorities allowed to take office because the capitalist parties did not fear that they would attack capitalism. To-day, the working class must either surrender or struggle for a *majority* Labour Government which will fight capitalism.

Like many other leaders, Mr. Morrison is not disposed to face these realities. In the *Forward* article quoted above he blames the " bloomers " of the Left and " declares we have not won sufficient Labour votes from the middle classes." G. D. H. Cole goes in for similar calculations. He is out to get the " small man " by hook or by crook. " The plain fact is that the floating vote which settles how the country is to be governed, is scared by Labour . . . ." he writes in a *New Statesman* article, which concludes in favour of " limited Socialism with social reform."

Nobody will dispute for one moment the importance of winning the middle classes, but it must be remembered that all this talk about the middle classes is only another way of saying that the Labour Party must go more and more to the right and become less and less a party of Socialism and working-class struggle.

The right wing leaders do not understand that the only possible basis for winning the middle class is a strong united working-class movement.

This is a lesson of history taught by Marx and reinforced by all experiences of recent years. Why was the " small man " swung behind the " National " stampede in 1931 ? Because of the split in the Labour leadership and the nervelessness of the Labour Government. If the Labour Cabinet had stood up to the bankers and for placing the burdens of the crisis on the shoulders of the rich, its decisiveness and determination would have rallied the middle class masses.

But the Labour Government slid down to ignominious collapse, giving Baldwin and Co. their chance to appear on the scene as the " strong " men, saviours of the pound and protectors of the small man's savings. Till this day, these memories of 1931 play a big part in holding back the middle classes from the Labour Party, even though economically they have not benefited by Tory rule.

If " respectability " could win middle class votes they would have been won over long ago. It is difficult to imagine what further modifications of policy the right wing leaders have in mind. Rationalisation has been substituted for nationalisation, the strike weapon is heavily at a discount, the united front is fiercely condemned and what remains

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of Socialism is quite divorced from the class struggle.[1] But the respectability gag does not work with the middle classes and mainly because the Conservatives are able to do it so much better than the Labour Party. They have much more experience in ringing the changes on patriotism and snobbery as the Jubilee showed. Only a bold working-class policy can win over the middle classes, because only by fighting capitalism will the workers prove to the middle class that there is an alternative road to capitalist reaction, and from this fight the middle classes will learn that only in alliance with the working class will it be possible to resist the worsening of their conditions.

The policy of the right wing will win neither the middle class nor the working class : reaction will remain in the saddle. Millions of workers voted for the Labour Party because they want Socialism, and those workers represent the basic forces of the Labour Party, forces which will be frittered away and destroyed if the policy of stepping into the shoes of the defunct Liberal Party is continued.

The Labour Party was defeated in the General Election not because there was too much Socialism, but because there was too little ; not because it was too much of a working-class party, but because it neglected the struggles of the working class. Only in the case of the miners was the workers' fight to live intimately connected up with the Election, and the miners responded by giving record majorities to the Labour candidates.

These conclusions must be faced in all seriousness. The Labour Party is now at the parting of the ways and has to choose between parliamentary impotence (and possibly the same fate as the German Social-Democratic Party) or a radical change of policy. The primary lesson of the General Election is the necessity of turning the Labour Party into a real anti-capitalist party, a militant united front of the working class. Otherwise, there will never be a Labour Government in Britain.

What does this mean in terms of concrete policy. Firstly, the ending of all divisions, splits and heresy-hunting, the Labour Party must return to the course pursued by so many of its early pioneers and become a broad coalition of all working-class forces. By excluding Communists and left wingers and even those members who dare to associate with non-official bodies (*e.g.*, the German Relief Committee), the Labour Party automatically cuts itself off from militant thought and the driving enthusiasm of the revolutionaries. This constitutes a real split in the working-class movement which is not to be measured in terms of the numerical strength of the Left in relation to the movement as a whole.

[1]It is quite true that the Labour Party publishes plenty of paper schemes for Socialism, but the party has become " doctrinaire without presenting a clearly stated policy of action." These are the apt words used by Mr. Duncan Leys in a letter to the *New Statesman*, in the course of which he also argues for co-operation with the Communist Party.

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In all countries there has been this split in the working class. In Germany the failure to bridge the gulf enabled fascism to come to power. In France, the establishment of the United Front between the Communist Party and the Socialist Party led to the formation of a great barrier against fascism ; the Popular Front inclusive of the middle classes who follow the Radical Party. In Britain, the affiliation of the Communist Party to the Labour Party would signify the unification of the revolutionary left with the main body of the Labour movement, the achievement of the united front according to the conditions in Britain where the Labour Party, based as it is on the trade unions, is the main expression of working-class political activity.

The direct practical advantages of such a united front in Britain were shown very clearly during the General Election, when there actually existed an unofficial united front between the members of the Communist Party and the Labour Party. The members of both parties worked shoulder to shoulder for a common objective, the defeat of the " National " Government and the return of a Labour Government ; side by side they addressed meetings, canvassed, distributed leaflets, etc.

The results cannot be denied. Not only Labour candidates and agents, but also members of the Labour Party Executive have paid tribute to the enthusiastic work and devotion of the Communists. It is no exaggeration to say that in very many constituencies there would hardly have been a campaign but for the activities of the Communists, who can claim the lion's share in the defeat of quite a number of Tories.

Every step in the direction of an all-in Labour Party would have repercussions far outside the frontiers of Great Britain, as the Labour Party is the only big Party within the Labour and Socialist International opposing the united front. It is, in fact, the sole serious obstacle to international unity just as the General Council of the Trades Union Congress is the chief stumbling block within the International Federation of Trade Unions. The achievement of international trade union unity and a united front between a Communist International and the Labour and Socialist International would signify the dawning of a new day for the world labour movement and the fight against war and fascism could be translated into a powerful reality. The key to this advance is the fight for the united front in Britain itself.

What are the issues around which unity can be achieved ? We are not thinking in terms of a cut-and-dried programme, but those immediate and sometimes changing issues affecting the daily lives of the workers, small shopkeepers and professional people : wages, salaries, hours, conditions, taxation, democratic rights, armament expenditure, the threat of war, etc. In the words of Dimitrov :

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> No conditions to unity of action, except one, and that an elementary condition acceptable for all workers, *viz.*, that the unity of action be directed against fascism, against the offensive of capital, against the threat of war, against the class enemy.

The first and most elementary issue is the defence of wages, hours and conditions and support to all workers demanding higher wages and improved conditions. Unless this is done, all talk of unity is meaningless.

Therefore the most urgent task to-day is solidarity with the miners, the advance guard of the entire Labour movement. The fight of all workers against poverty is bound up with the outcome of the miners' fight for the extra 2s. per shift. If the miners win, the road will be opened for all to advance.

All behind the miners ! The Government and the mineowners can be compelled to give way if the entire trade union movement rallies behind the miners and if other sections of the population (small shopkeepers, professional people, etc.) realise that a higher standard of living for the miners is directly in their interests as well. Engineers, railwaymen, clothing workers, etc., are all demanding the restoration of cuts. The uniting of all the struggles is an imperatively necessary step.

These industrial struggles always raise sharply the question of profits and their distribution, and although the working class is not yet strong enough to throw the parasites off its back, the fight against the attempts to put all the burden of the crisis on to the producers goes on and must be strengthened. The miners are demanding the abolition of royalties which amount to the enormous sum of £5,000,000 a year.

This fight for the abolition of royalties must be energetically supported and supplemented by the further demand for the nationalisation of the mines. And by nationalisation, we mean something quite different from public corporations as typified by the London Passenger Transport Board, which is simply a big capitalist monopoly outside parliamentary control.

The public corporations so favoured by the leaders of the Labour Party are only a means of making capitalism more efficient and cannot in any way be regarded as a step towards the elimination of profit-making and Socialism. Nationalisation would mean State ownership, workers' control and the complete or partial abolition of parasitism.

Next comes the fight against unemployment and as an immediate measure the abolition of the Means Test, then the provision of work. Two million unemployed and on all sides an enormous amount of work to be done. Millions of workers need new houses at reasonable rents, there is the necessity to set on foot vast schemes of reconstruction, electrification, road-making, and the development of agriculture.

Where is the money to come from ? The National Government has talked about raising a £200 million defence loan in order to build more battleships, tanks and aeroplanes. Clearly, there is no shortage of money in the country, the problem is how best to spend it. We are proposing

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a real defence loan, the raising of £200 millions for defending the livelihood and health of the wealth producers of Britain.

This productive expenditure would make possible the raising of the standard of living, improvement of the social services, abolition of the food taxes and relief in taxation for the middle class.

How will it be possible to transform the present rearmament programme into a policy of armament reduction? By fighting for the complete reversal of the present foreign policy of British Imperialism and for a real collective peace system.

Peace can be preserved by the unfailing vigilance of the people and relentless opposition to the war mongers. On the international scale this means a determined fight for Abyssinian independence and for co-operation with the one country which is pledged to peace and has no imperialist interests—the Soviet Union. The country of Socialism is now strong enough to draw even imperialist states within the orbit of its peace policy, witness the signing of the Pacts of Mutual Assistance with France and Czechoslovakia.

These Pacts which provide for mutual action in the event of the signatories being attacked by an aggressor are a definite barrier against the military expansionist plans of Hitler fascism. If the Pacts were extended, if Germany was forced to come in, Hitler would have to renounce his war policy; if Britain was compelled to line up with France and the Soviet Union, a powerful combination making for peace in Europe would be brought into existence in Europe.

This is what we mean by a real collective peace system; the extension of the Franco-Soviet Pact and the strengthening of the League of Nations by utilising its machinery for measures of disarmament and full sanctions —immediately applied—against any country guilty of aggression.

A resolute fight for these demands inside and outside the House of Commons can have the effect of speedily turning the tables on the National Government. With over 150 members on the floor of the House the Parliamentary Labour Party could make an effective show that would have mighty repercussions throughout the country. The spirit of defeatism which accepts the Government's big majority as dooming the Opposition to impotency should not be tolerated for one moment.[2]

[2]The Governmental crisis over the Abyssinian "peace plan" which occurred after this article had gone to press, was a vivid proof of the instability of the National Government and the effectiveness of mass opposition.

The Government's majority of 257 by no means reflects the actual division of the votes in the country. The total Government vote is 11,801,532, the total Opposition vote being 10,076,832. A really spirited campaign by the Labour Party would have effected a big turnover of seats. In an article warning the Conservatives, J. L. Garvin states that: "A very slight shift in the voting last Thursday would have reduced the huge Ministerial ranks to half the towering predominance they again enjoy. . . . . Many more Ministerial seats than before are held by very slender margins which any considerable change of feeling towards the Cabinet in future would wipe out." (*Sunday Observer*, November 24.)

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Willie Gallacher has already struck a fighting note in the House. If a militant fight is made by the entire Parliamentary Labour Party, the Government's credit will rapidly decline and millions of workers will be eager and willing to back up their fighting representatives.

Only such a fight will bring a Labour Government within our grasp. There must be no waiting for what 1940 may bring forth, but all shoulders to the wheel now for a determined parliamentary and extra-parliamentary fight for the resignation of the Government and a speedy General Election at which a Labour Government will be elected. The alternative, the continuation of the old methods and old policies makes certain that the " National " Government will be able to prepare at its leisure for another fraudulent election like the last, makes certain that there will never be another Labour Government in Britain.

The Communist Party will continue its drive for the building-up of the workers' fighting front, confident of success and the rallying of more and more workers behind the banner of the mighty Communist International. To-day, the Communist Party of Great Britain is more influential and closer to the workers than at any time in its history, but there is still a great need for the further strengthening of the Communist Party and the *Daily Worker*.

The General Election experiences were a clear demonstration that the stronger the Communist Party the stronger the fight of the working class. All Communist local organisations helped directly to strengthen the campaign of the Labour candidates, the Communist Election Manifesto and other material laid bare the class issues of the General Election and helped to clarify the class consciousness of the workers.

Without the Communist Party there would be no organised fight for the united front, it would be only a striving, an aspiration of the advanced workers without practical action.

We are now in that stage of the development of the Labour movement where the next step forward is the achievement of the united front. Consequently, the Communist Party bends all its energies to this task not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end, the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a Socialist Soviet Britain. But this goal can never be reached without the achievement of the united front and the active work of the revolutionary party within the united front for the hewing-out of the road along which the mass battalions of the great working-class movement can march to victory over capitalism.

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THE MINER'S STRUGGLE IN NOTTS.

By W. L. ELLIS

THE historian of the future when dealing with 20th century capitalism in decline, will spend much time in describing how the Notts coalowners sought to keep "their" men safe for capitalism. In spite of their systematic attempts over the last nine years to intimidate the Notts miners, there are signs that their hold is weakening.

In 1926 wholesale victimisation took place in Notts. All over the county hundreds of working-class fighters were refused entry, not only into the local pits, but into any pit in the county. Even such firms, which were considered relatively decent, practised victimisation on a large scale. Nearly every miner holding a position in the Notts Miners' Association (N.M.A.) affiliated to the Miners' Federation of Great Britain was cleared out of the industry and the N.M.A. had to rely on a few checkweighmen as their means of contact with the men.

Why was Notts selected as the area to break the 1926 struggle? The coalowners, desperate towards the end of the struggle, carefully analysed Notts and came to the conclusion that a break in the miners' ranks could be effected, (1) because the long established butty system lent itself for the purpose and (2) because of the spineless nature of the leadership of Spencer, Varley & Co.

The Influence of the Butty System.

What is the butty system and why did it lend itself in this way? A few men are placed in charge of a number of workers on a particular stretch of coal-face and they undertake to produce coal at so much per ton. Every week the tonnage raised expresses itself in £.s.d., the chargemen (buttymen) draw the money and pay the workers (daymen) under them, very often not more than the minimum and pocket the rest. A few years ago it was not uncommon for buttymen to take home £20 a week. Some of these good jobs were bought, sometimes with hard cash and sometimes by other methods. Many thousands of pounds, representing the sweat and blood of the daymen, found their way into the pockets of colliery officials. During the preliminaries towards opening the North Notts pits during the 1926 stoppage the buttymen were quietly informed that unless they reported for work by a certain date their good jobs would be given to others. The buttymen in turn sounded their henchmen, the would-be buttymen, and piece by piece the stage was set for a resumption

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of work. These men had more than the average to lose and this was effectively played on by the coalowners.

How did this affect the N.M.A. and why is the butty system tolerated ? One memorable Notts ballot taken round about the end of the war, showed a big majority in favour of ending this soul-destroying system. Many of the butties held positions in the N.M.A., and they made a big contribution towards stopping effective expression of the men's desires as had been revealed in the ballot. In 1926 a number of butties held positions in the N.M.A., and upon their return to work it not only influenced others wanting to get some staunch butty's job, but it also seriously interfered with the N.M.A. organisation for conducting the struggle. The N.M.A. were unable to repair the breaches quickly enough and soon an almost normal output of coal began to flow down the county and the miners in central and south Notts were weakened in their resistance. A ballot of the Notts miners on the question " for or against the butty system " taken to-day would show an overwhelming majority against it.

G. A. Spencer, a full-time official of the N.M.A. for many years, was never wholeheartedly in the 1926 struggle. When the breakaway took place he actually went to one district and negotiated for a general resumption of work. His job was to observe the M.F.G.B. decision and endeavour to keep the men solid. He chose to ignore the M.F.G.B. decision, and some people are of the opinion that this action was not " spur of the moment action." G. A. Spencer knew very well that this action would finish him with the M.F.G.B., and knowing this, the idea of establishing a rival union was pushed forward. The coalowners knew and approved of this course ; I can vouch for this from my personal experience because when I went to see about resuming work I was told, amongst other things, that it was not decided which of the two unions would be recognised. This happened before the Spencer Union had taken public shape.

The Coalowners' Decision.

Events moved rapidly. The N.M.A. representatives were not allowed to occupy their pre-stoppage collecting stations on colliery property and at some collieries Spencer collectors occupied the old N.M.A. collecting stations. The N.M.A. were compelled to take collections away from colliery property, this meaning in some cases a considerable distance from the pit because the land adjoining the colliery belonged to the company. One N.M.A. collector was told by his former manager " that they (meaning the coalowners) would starve him to death." The fight was on. Spencer, backed by the coalowners had all the material advantages. N.M.A. collectors week after week in all kinds of weather took up their stands. In the early days of this conflict, the miners were gradually being won

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back. The coalowners realised that all was not well and they instituted the policy of intimidation which up-to-date has not been broken down.

Keeping Spencerism Alive

Spencerism has no real hold on the Notts miners. The T.U.C. ballot proved this conclusively. The recent General Election results in the county of Notts, the Mansfield and Broxtowe Divisions in particular, confirmed it. At a number of large pits compulsory membership of the Spencer Union is a condition of employment. At many other pits it is freely "given forth" that only members of the Spencer Union will get the better paid jobs. Men who remained true to the N.M.A. were reduced to lower paid jobs and working miners who came forward to act as local N.M.A. officials were found to be "inefficient" or redundant. The Miners' Federation Executive Committee Minutes for February, 1935, contain an amazing indictment against the Notts coalowners.

The Executive of the Federation says:

"Machinery is being more extensively employed in Nottinghamshire, therefore the men say 'my chance of retaining my job is better if I am not attached to the N.M.A. than if I was; in fact, all things being equal they can be no worse.' Officials at the colliery are making no secret of it that the men who must go are men who belong to the N.M.A. If we are asked for proof of that, we should supply facts in the following order:

"LINBY COLLIERY: There were two men stopped at this colliery, and they were not permitted to fetch their tools. After a few letters —to which we received no reply—we threatened litigation. The colliery manager then wrote as follows: 'We are in receipt of your letter of August 3, but we would point out to you that we are not allowed to recognise your Association.'

"NORMANTON: A person is short of money. He makes an application to the colliery manager, who tells him he can have his cards. We press for wages in lieu of notice. After a short period we receive a letter from the colliery manager: 'That most probably the man would have been reinstated sooner if there had been no correspondence.'

"BILSTHORPE: At this colliery we have been trying to persuade the manager to treat with us on compensation cases. We have written three letters since the 18th January to which we have not had a reply.

"BARBER WALKERS: In November, 1934, we received advice that a reduction in the basis rate of wages paid to certain men was reduced from 7s. 2d. to 6s. 9d.—5d. off the basis. We have written the colliery company several times to which we get no reply. Now it may seem easy to suggest that we have got redress, either

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in the county agreement or in the Minimum Wage Act, but invariably the miners are so apprehensive of being dismissed rather than make their claim known. They suffer silently as an alternative.

For example, we were pressed into Court quite recently with two cases of compensation—both of which we won. Neither of these men are now working.

" CLIFTON : Some time ago amongst other men, one of our local officials was suspended from Clifton. As time went on Clifton decided to advertise the Employment Exchange for a number of workmen. A green card was given to this young man, but he was told there was no work for him there.

Safety Department—Pit Inspectors

" In 1931 we had reason to correspond with the M.F.G.B. that the workmen in Nottinghamshire were not permitted to appoint their own pit inspectors. As a result of that correspondence with the Federation we were encouraged to attempt the appointment of pit inspectors. Our action led to a letter coming from an official at a colliery, informing us that ' unless we were permitted to allow the matter to remain at that colliery as it was—that is, no inspectors belonging to the N.M.A.—this official said he would approach the manager to give up stopping check-weigh contributions and put the whole of the colliery on yardage.'

" Another case as late as September, 1934. Inspectors were appointed in order to defeat these men making an inspection. One of them is given notice. They make an application to the management to make an inspection. They are refused, and one of them was called into the office and he was given the option of either giving up the position of workmen's inspector or leaving the colliery. Force of economic circumstances pressed him to what he believed to be the lesser of two evils. He retained the job.

" I do not think it is necessary for me to continue these facts. They are all too painful to relate."

The Methods Employed

A Yorkshire miner, a member of the Yorkshire Miners' Association, secured employment at Bilsthorpe (Notts.). Conditions were so bad that he had to talk to his mates about them. The spy in the group reported him to an official and the miner was " stood off for a day or so." Shortly afterwards, he received notice of his dismissal and the reason given was that " he was contaminating his colleagues."

A rector, not far from Bilsthorpe, was sympathetic towards the miners. His sympathy was so marked that it became known to the colliery management, and true to their inhuman characteristics, they took measures to

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destroy his means of approach to the miners. Rectors usually visit such members of their flock, but this particular rector had to resort to "underground" methods in visiting his sick parishioners, because if it became known that he had visited one of the workers then that worker was in grave danger of losing his employment. One colliery employs a spy on a retaining fee of 5s. per week. Speed the day when he will receive his "reward."

There is published in the Leen Valley a rank and file miners' paper called *The Gleam*. A few weeks ago it published an account of a serious accident. The under-manager at this pit was incensed. The men working near the scene of the accident were invited to act as detectives to discover the reporter of the accident. The under-manager offered £25 and the deputy £5 to any person giving information that would lead to identifying the worker reporter. (The £30 is still unclaimed.)

A few days ago two long term unemployed miners secured employment in one of the pits. When they arrived at the coal face the coal-cutting machine was working and filling coal and drawing timber was in progress. They tolerated these unsafe conditions for a few hours courting death all the time. The roof was "coming in" and they realised it. They decided that the surface was the place for them. Shortly after they had left the working place, a young miner who had been sent to fill one of the jobs vacated, was brought out on a stretcher. The next day this particular stretch of face was "in solid," meaning the whole of this stretch was buried beneath hundreds of tons of stone. A few more miners missed death by inches.

The Present Position of the Spencer Union

Facts about it are hard to secure. The N.M.A. publishes a monthly return; if the Spencer Union publishes one it is very closely guarded.

They boast of increased membership. This cannot be substantiated. As recently as November 2 last, the Spencer Union suspended all rules relating to out-of-work pay. The new scales operative for the period December 1, 1935 to May 31, 1936, are: (*a*) 3s. per full member, 1s. 6d. per half member; (*b*) Odd days and children cannot be paid for; (*c*) Members on sick pay or receiving full compensation cannot be paid; (*d*) No member shall be paid more than four weeks; (*e*) Ordinary contributions must be paid during this period.

Throughout the life of the Spencer Union great press publicity has been given to the fact that it pays Old Age Pensions and out-of-work benefits. The above reductions in rates and period for out-of-work pay means that the Spencer Union is facing a financial crisis. Less contributions are being paid. The struggle against Spencerism is reaching a critical stage. The coalowners realise it and they will do all possible to bolster it up for a period. The workers in Notts and elsewhere must

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be made to realise it. Unity in Notts now could deliver a smashing blow against the coalowners' union.

The Spencer Union boasts of the amount won in compensation, but remains silent on how much has been taken off price lists on some occasions negotiated by representatives of the Spencer Union, while on other occasions they have stood idly by whilst the reduction has been accomplished.

There are many workmen's pit inspectors who are members of this union. The Spencer Union does not boast about the appalling accident rate from falls of roof in Notts.

What branch meetings are held are usually hole and corner affairs. The N.M.A. give widespread publicity to their meetings, not so with the Spencer Union.

The amount of open support for Spencerism can be illustrated as follows. G. A. Spencer, M.P. for Broxtowe 1918-1929, has not addressed a public meeting in Hucknall, the heart of the Broxtowe Division, since the end of 1926. Without the coalowners' support Spencerism would not last a week.

The Notts workers want all the help that can be given. After years of struggle against overwhelming odds, victory is in sight. The prerequisite for victory is working-class unity. Mansfield Trades Council are to be congratulated on passing a resolution containing the following important paragraph:

> We call on the Notts Miners' Association, the M.F.G.B. and the T.U.C. General Council to convene a county conference of all working-class organisations to rally support against Spencerism and in support of the 2s. a day increase.

Now a word with regard to the Spencer Union. The Notts mine-owners have offered the Spencer Union 1s. a day increase. Lest this should be thought to be a favourable concession, we have to remember that the output per man employed is higher in Notts than in any other part of Britain. There is no coalfield in Britain where the full 2s. could be paid with less difficulty than in Notts.

The 1s. increase that is offered is not only a bribe to desert the rest of the miners. It is much less than the Notts miners could obtain if they entered the struggle alongside the miners in other coalfields. It is not only a bribe to betray the others. It is a bribe to betray their own deepest interests.

The men in the Spencer Union must act against this. They must demand branch meetings to reconsider the question. At these meetings they must insist on the Notts miners standing alongside the rest of the British miners. They must make it clear to Spencer and to the coal-owners that they will not scab. If Notts acts in this spirit the 2s. a day can be won throughout Britain.

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THIEVES' CANT

Letter addressed to a partisan of peace on the lofty sentiments of Sir Samuel Hoare and his cronies.

15th December, 1935.

DEAR N,

I am very pleased you asked me whether the Government had no fear of public opinion when they did this outrageous thing: for it means that no one whom you meet is in favour of this dirty business. Second, that you ask what possessed Baldwin "to follow Hoare's folly"; for by analysing Cabinet policy, we track down the war-danger to its source: and third, I am most pleased that you ask what can be done to stop it: for only in this way lies the possibility of peace.

I shall try to answer all the points you raise; even though this leaves a hundred others to be dealt with. But you are absolutely right in stirring up everyone to action to stop this infamy. For, quite apart from moral indignation you feel at Hoare's behaviour (and a little pique at having been taken in so easily by his earlier speeches) you have to see that on your *action*, together with the *action* of the workers, together with the *action* of all who are for peace, nearly everything now depends. For make no mistake about it, Hoare and Eden and Baldwin and Chamberlain have rushed us towards the slaughter-house since last Thursday.

For the remainder, I shall make brief notes on this Hoare-Laval deal, its why and its wherefore.

Who are the persons? Laval, an ex-Socialist adventurer, is one of the gangster types of politician who come increasingly to the front as the crisis grows for capitalism. His villainous features do not belie him: and his ability in crooked ways is notorious. Samuel Hoare, the British Foreign Secretary, served his apprenticeship in international affairs as an associate of "White" Russians, amongst whom are to be found the most degenerate specimens of an ex-ruling class in Europe. To carry through this deal, Laval and Hoare were a fitting pair.

The Result at home and abroad. The result at home was such a spontaneous burst of indignation that even the "Bloody Old *Times*" succumbed to it. Abroad, in the U.S.A., the Scandinavian countries, the Dominions, Turkey, India, as well as in the U.S.S.R., the dirty business was condemned. Not since the Baldwin governments began a dozen years ago has there been such a political swindle as this.

Motives Alleged. Naturally the Government does not say anything to the effect that "the General Election being safely over, we can now sit down to business"—the business in question being the betrayal of those

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millions deceived by their election promises. The alleged motive they are putting about in the press is the danger they suddenly realised of an Anglo-Italian war with the fifty nations of the League standing aloof. In this form it is obviously mere scare propaganda. They hope to kill two birds with one stone: first, to get a wriggle-out of the hole they are in; and second, to get another pretext for huge armaments.

Laval's Motives. It was clear Laval wanted to prevent oil sanctions in which he was backed up by those British capitalists whose financial interests are bound up with oil and Italian fascism. For the British treachery of the Anglo-German naval treaty last spring made the French Imperialists anxious to hang on to their alliance with Fascist Italy at all costs.

Policy of British Imperialism

Before War Began. British interests were—(1) to prevent the highlands of Abyssinia becoming an Italian fortress right in the fork of Britain's African Empire and Middle Eastern Empire; (2) to keep a grip on Lake Tsana and the tributaries of the Nile according to the Treaties and negotiations of 1906, 1915 and 1925; (3) not to let the League of Nations collapse at this moment and on this issue.

After War Began. British interests were—(1) not to have an Italian victory for reasons given above; (2) not to have an Abyssinian victory, a victory of an African people over a European power, a victory of a semi-colonial over an imperialist power—lest the whole of Africa with its subject peoples be enflamed to rise against British imperialism; (3) not to have a crash in Italy, since that they were sure would not mean a change from Mussolini to some other Prime Minister, but a change from Fascism to social revolution. Therefore, at this stage British policy was for mild sanctions to be applied whose after effect would be such (loss of markets, etc.) that fascist Italy would not cross Britain's path again. This was the October policy.

The Second Month of the War of Aggression. It soon became clear, however, that the continuance of the war and the particular line of Britain was becoming more and more hazardous. There were two main reasons for this—the military situation and Egypt. The military situation after two months showed such a meagre advance (note the replacement of De Bono by Badoglio) that it appeared years would elapse before the Italian forces could reach Addis Ababa. Such a military situation intensified the danger of an Abyssinian victory and the crash of fascism in Italy, one or other, or both. It would also mean the independence of Abyssinia, which would make it much more difficult for Britain to prevent the independence of Egypt. All the various Egyptian nationalist parties had united to demand independence and a movement of revolt was

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spreading in Cairo and Alexandria. Furthermore, if Britain continued to support Abyssinia against Italy, Italian fascism might find the means of supporting Egypt against Britain. The whole thing was becoming all too hazardous. The contradiction between imperialist policy and the support of independence of small nations was becoming all too clear.

Consequently, the National Government set itself to rescue Italian fascism on the one hand from the fate that seemed to be awaiting it, and on the other hand to rescue itself from the fate which seemed to be awaiting it in Egypt.

Interests Outside. All so far is viewed from the angle of the League-Italian-Abyssinian conflict in relation to the Middle-Eastern and African interests of British Imperialism. But the Far East and East Indies is a theatre of British interests, which has not been " temporarily closed " during the Italo-Abyssinian drama. Nor has the European theatre, with Nazi Germany as a principal character, been shut up " for the duration." And the manifold interests of British Imperialism react on one another.

East India and Far East. With Japan's proposed lopping-off of the five northern provinces of China and the Japanese objection to British financial schemes in China, it is of the utmost importance to have the seas East and West of Singapore fully staffed with British warships. This object, incompatible with long-continued concentration of warships in the Red Sea and Mediterranean, seemed to demand a friendly settlement with Italian Fascism.

Naval Conference. The Naval Conference for swollen programmes cannot very easily be conducted with Italian Fascism at enmity with Britain : and the Hoare-Laval plan was a bribe also for naval purposes. Actually, the reported effect of the crooked deal in Washington was so unfavourable to Britain as to cause a swing-back of American Imperialism on to their old policy of insistence on " the Freedom of the Seas."

Nazi Germany continues to re-arm in preparation for aggressive war and rejoices in any wrecking of the League of Nations as a potential instrument for peace. Naturally the Nazis (while professing to be shocked at the barbarism of Hoare and Laval) are pleased to see the chief original powers of the League proposing that the League of Nations should justify and help an aggressor. What is sauce for the Italian goose is equally sauce for the Nazi gander.

The Four Power Pact again. Indeed, the Hoare-Laval infamy would enable Hoare to turn round and say to the Nazis : " Why stay out of the League of Nations ? Come right in. This is Liberty Hall. Come in and have your ' just aspirations ' satisfied." Such a step, already discussed privately at Geneva on November 2, would open the way to the breaking of the Franco-Soviet pact for peace and the re-establishment of the Four Power Pact for war. For an exclusive pact of Germany, Italy,

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France and Britain would inevitably become an instrument for war upon the Soviet Union. While Japan might be induced to " behave better " in China by the prospect of a Far Eastern slice cut from the U.S.S.R. These are some further prospects opened up by the Hoare-Laval plan.

The Confidence Trick. Now even if Hoare were to be dropped overboard as a Jonah, this would neither absolve the Cabinet of responsibility nor would it mean a change in the policy so noisomely revealed. No doubt other forms would have to be found. But the Anglo-German naval treaty, with all the attempts to surround it with a friendly atmosphere (Prince of Wales incitement to British Legion, " purely sporting " Anglo-German football match, etc. etc.) is a fact which no speeches of Baldwin can dissolve. But by this time, I believe you have realised that his lofty sentiments and talk of " you know you can trust me " are just so much *thieves' cant.*

Political Pointers. The whole business has confirmed the prescience of the Communist policy of the last half-year as compared to the disastrous T.U.C. support of Hoare and the equally disastrous " left " attitude.

This lends weight to the Communist policy of an " all-in " fight for peace against the National Government.

I am glad to think that you are coming to see the necessity of this fight : and the need for waging it without respect of persons or previous party attachments.

Yours, etc.,

R. Page Arnot.

Postscript.—The appendix to this letter gives the actual proposals. But you should remember that the British Ambassador at Rome was told to make it clear, so ran the wording of the telegram, that the British and French Governments were " anxious to take account of Italian aspirations," while the Ambassador at Addis Ababa was told to " use your utmost influence to induce Emperor to give careful and favourable consideration to these proposals."

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Appendix

[The following document is taken from the White Paper (Cmd 5044) *presented in the second week of December to Parliament. It represents the Annexe to the version of the telegram sent on December 10 by Sir Samuel Hoare as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Sir E. Drummond, the British Ambassador in Rome, for communication to the Italian Government.]*

I.—*Exchange of Territories*

THE Governments of Great Britain and France agree to recommend to His Majesty the Emperor of Ethiopia the acceptance of the following exchanges of territory between Ethiopia and Italy:

(a) *Tigre.*—Cession to Italy of eastern Tigre approximately limited on the south by the River Gheva and on the west by a line running from north to south passing between Axum (on the Ethiopian side) and Adowa (on the Italian side).

(b) *Rectification of Frontiers between the Danakil Country and Eritrea* leaving to the south of the boundary line Aussa and the extent of Eritrean territory necessary to give Ethiopia an outlet to the sea to be defined below.

(c) *Rectification of Frontiers between the Ogaden and Italian Somaliland.*—Starting from the trijunction point between the frontiers of Ethiopia, Kenya and Italian Somaliland the new Italo-Ethiopian frontier would follow a general north-easterly direction cutting the Oueb Shebeli at Iddidolo, leaving Gorahei to the east, Warandab to the west and meeting the frontier of British Somaliland where it intersects the 45th meridian.

The rights of the tribes of British Somaliland to the use of grazing areas and wells situated in the territories granted to Italy by this delimitation should be guaranteed.

(d) Ethiopia will receive an outlet to the sea with full sovereign rights. It seems that this outlet should be formed preferably by the cession, to which Italy would agree, of the port of Assab and of a strip of territory giving access to this port along the frontier of French Somaliland.

The United Kingdom and French Governments will endeavour to obtain from the Ethiopian Government guarantees for the fulfilment of the obligations which devolve upon them regarding slavery and arms traffic in the territories acquired by them.

II.—*Zone of Economic Expansion and Settlement.*

The United Kingdom and French Governments will use their influence at Addis Ababa and at Geneva to the end that the formation in Southern Ethiopia of a zone of economic expansion and settlement reserved to Italy should be accepted by His Majesty the Emperor and approved by the League of Nations.

The limits of this zone would be: on the east, the rectified frontier between Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland; on the north, the 8th parallel; on the west, the 35th meridian; on the south, the frontier between Ethiopia and Kenya.

Within this zone, which would form an integral part of Ethiopia, Italy would enjoy exclusive economic rights which might be administered by a privileged company or by any other like organisation, to which would be recognised—subject to the acquired right of natives and foreigners—the right of ownership of unoccupied territories, the monopoly of the exploitation of mines, forests, etc. This organisation would be obliged to contribute to the economic equipment of the country, and to devote a portion of its revenues to expenditure of a social character for the benefit of the native population.

The control of the Ethiopian administration in the zone would be exercised, under the sovereignty of the Emperor, by the services of the scheme of assistance drawn up by the League of Nations. Italy would take a preponderating, but not an exclusive, share in these services which would be under the direct control of one of the principal advisers attached to the Central Government. The principal adviser in question, who might be of Italian nationality, would be the assistant, for the affairs in question, of the Chief Adviser delegated by the League of Nations to assist the Emperor. The Chief Adviser would not be a subject of one of the Powers bordering on Ethiopia.

The services of the scheme of assistance, in the capital as well as in the reserved zone, would regard it as one of their essential duties to ensure the safety of Italian subjects and the free development of their enterprises.

The Government of the United Kingdom and the French Government will willingly endeavour to ensure that this organisation, the details of which must be elaborated by the League of Nations, fully safeguards the interests of Italy in this region.

Similar telegrams are being sent to the British and French Ministers in Addis Ababa.

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ICELAND AND BRITISH IMPERIALISM

By EINAR OLGEIRSSON

IN recent years the British capitalist newspapers have been paying increasing attention to what political changes will be made in Iceland when the union with Denmark ceases after 1940. There are signs of developing interest by the British capitalist class to secure full financial and political control of this country and British newspapers are anxiously taking note of whatever voices are heard among Icelanders against British imperialism. It is therefore necessary for the British Labour Movement and working class to realise what is going on in the relations between Iceland and British finance capital.

British Finance Capital in Iceland

Iceland has only 110,000 inhabitants, but its foreign trade had in 1929 a turnover of about £7,500,000 diminishing to £5 millions in 1934. Icelandic capitalism is very young, developing mostly after 1900, first under the influence of Danish finance capital, but very soon this dominating position was taken over by British finance capital. During the 1914-18 war this change rapidly developed. By 1918 the exports of Iceland to Denmark had fallen to 2.2 per cent. of the total (as against 39.7 per cent. in 1913), but the exports to England increased to 48.4 per cent. (from 13.8 per cent. 1913). At the same time the political influence of Britain became more and more dominant. During the war the representative of the British Government in Iceland, Mr. Cable, acted as a virtual dictator. Prices for Icelandic export goods were dictated by British capital, an intelligence service was organised, private letters were opened, and British goods sold only at enormous prices.

After the war the investment of British capital rapidly increased, especially through the following channels:

(1) The Icelandic Government has raised heavy loans in England. The total state debts were in 1934 about £2 millions, most of them held in England by Hambro's Bank and Barclay's Bank.

(2) The Icelandic State Bank has a debt of about £1 million, also mostly held in the London banks.

(3) Icelandic private capitalists are in debt to British capitalists for trawlers, various means of production, etc., to a total of about £1 million.

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The direct investment of British capital through loans in Iceland is therefore in the neighbourhood of £4 million.

Then comes the investment of different British trusts through agencies in Iceland.

The most powerful are the oil trusts, " Shell " and " Anglo-Persian " (British Petroleum Co.). These trusts have built large oversea tank stations, which are evidently also meant for supplying British steamers in case of war. Through their co-operation these trusts monopolise the market and get thereby a key power over the Icelandic fisheries.

British coal trusts have now 77 per cent. of the coal markets in Iceland guaranteed them by treaties between the governments.

The British trust, Bowring & Co., London, monopolises the production and export of fishmeal through possession of all the fishmeal factories in Iceland. When this monopoly last year was threatened by the competition of Norwegian capitalists, who offered a higher price to the fishermen for the bones of the fish than the " Icelandic " British factories, an Act of Parliament was passed in the Icelandic " Althing " putting an export duty on fishbones high enough to exclude the Norwegian competition. As a result the price of bones to the fishermen fell about 30 per cent.

In this way most of the branches of Icelandic production are dominated by British capital.

Then the British trusts and banks control political power by various obvious methods, besides using the debts as a coercive instrument. The oil trusts especially have engaged the leaders of the political parties on their behalf. A former minister of the Conservative Party is a member of the local Board of Directors of Shell, and the leader of the Social Democratic Party of " British Petroleum." Leading politicians and Members of Parliament are directors of the different " Straw " companies which Bowring & Co. have set up ; the bone duty, therefore, was easily passed.

But the chief domination of British capital is through its power as creditor to the State Bank and the Government. This was most clearly shown last winter when the Bank of England demanded a declaration from the Icelandic Government, as a condition for a new loan, containing the following pledges :

(1) The Government must not obtain any new loan without permission of the Bank of England.

(2) The Government must not engage in any new guarantees without similar permission.

(3) The balance of imports and exports must be so regulated as to enable Iceland to pay its interest and debts to England in foreign currency.

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These conditions were accepted by the Government and the three political parties, represented in Parliament, the Conservative, the Farmer Party, and the Labour Party.

This should suffice to show what power British imperialism has got in Iceland, how it is exploiting the toiling masses and has the richest section of the Icelandic bourgeoisie as allies in this exploitation.

Importance of Iceland in Future Wars

British diplomacy is old and experienced. In competition with the capitalism of U.S.A., British capital exceeds it through longer preparation for getting hold of important strategic points. This is the case in Iceland.

As Lenin said to John Reed during the second Congress of the Communist International, Iceland holds a very important strategic position in a future war, especially between Britain and the U.S.A.. It has a special significance for Britain as a food store (the richest fishing grounds in the world), even more so as a port for men-of-war, but above all it is of decisive importance as an aviation base.

This the British capitalists and their Foreign Office very well know, and have made their preparations accordingly. The majority of the shares in " British Petroleum " is in possession of the Government, and the capital investment of some of the chief oil trusts has been made in agreement with the officials of the English navy.

But the other imperialist countries are also getting interested, especially as far as aviation is concerned. Trans-American Airlines Corporation in U.S.A. has obtained permission from the Icelandic Parliament to build an airport in Iceland. This " victory " of American diplomacy was, however, to some extent frustrated by the English Government by forbidding the Danish Government to give the same American company a corresponding licence in Greenland, which is absolutely necessary in order that the Icelandic airports can be of use. But negotiations between the United States and Denmark are going on, and England tries to prevent the United States getting control over Greenland. The last diplomatic victory of England in this struggle was that Stauning, Prime Minister of Denmark, gave up his journey to New York.

Meanwhile the pilots make their " peaceful " air travels. Lindbergh has been to Iceland, flying all round the coast and carrying on investigations there. The German Gronau has made several expeditions to Iceland, and in 1933 an Italian air expedition under the leadership of Balbo made its way over Iceland. Now " Aberdeen Airways " are preparing air routes to Iceland, which will probably be opened shortly.

It is therefore evident that Iceland, besides being exploited by British capitalism in peaceful times, is in danger of being made an object of battle

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and battleground between the greatest imperialist states. At present British imperialism has undoubted hegemony and has made good preparations, but the struggle is getting harder behind the scenes.

The Struggle of the Icelandic People for Social and National Liberty

The total national "wealth" of Iceland is estimated at about £10 million, as much as the British dreadnought "Rodney" alone costs. 5,000 persons in Iceland possess £5 million. £5 million are owed to foreign capital. 90 per cent. of the population are poor, though producing such quantities for export.

The Icelandic people were nationally subjected for five centuries and after gaining juridical national rights of independence in 1918, they got more and more financially subjected to British imperialism, as shown above. And now the danger of Iceland also losing its juridical national independence is imminent. The social burden of the oppression is very hard for the working classes. Payment of debts and interest annually is about £5 per head. The average income of a worker in Iceland is £60—£80 a year, when the total national income is over £5 million, or £250 average for a family of 5 persons.

The struggle of the toilers for social and national freedom has been sharpening in the last years, especially after the Communist Party of Iceland was founded in 1930. There have been hard fights under the leadership of that party; the best known was the fight of the unemployed against the police of Reykjavik on November 9, 1932, when the unemployed were victorious. There has been growing anxiety in the Icelandic upper bourgeoisie and besides its preparations for fascism, there are tendencies to rely more and more upon British imperialism, if its position should be threatened. The "national" bourgeois newspapers were delighted, when the insurrection of Invergordon was suppressed. The governing Icelandic bank and fish magnates' oligarchy is getting more and more into such relations with British finance capital, as from any real national point of view can only be characterised as high treason.

With the existing social and national oppression and the danger of war imminent, the working classes in Iceland are calling for a strong united front against social and national oppression, against Icelandic fascism and British imperialism.

But one of the main arguments of the Icelandic bourgeoisie and its followers is that it would not be any use for the Icelandic people to try to achieve full social and national liberty, because in case of such a revolution the British fleet would occupy Iceland.

It is evident that in the present state of politics in the world it would be difficult and fraught with risks for British imperialism to attack Iceland

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in the event of big political changes there. However strong, British imperialism is compelled to reckon with the peace policy of the U.S.S.R., the antagonisms of the other imperialist countries and with the solidarity of the working classes in all countries.

On the other hand, it is clear that the Icelandic people cannot, in case of victory over the Icelandic bourgeoisie, defend itself with arms against the British navy. In its struggle for social and national liberty the Icelandic working and middle classes must more than most other peoples rely upon international solidarity and, in the first place, of the British working class.

The full victory over the oppressors of the Icelandic working class can only be gained through active help and brotherly solidarity of the British working class.

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BACKWARD EUROPE AND PROGRESSIVE ASIA

By V. I. LENIN

[*On the twelfth anniversary of the death of Lenin the attempt at re-division of the world amongst the big imperialist powers has already begun in Africa and Asia. The meeting of the chief naval powers in London now arises from their old rivalries over the partition of China. Here in this article, written twenty-three years ago, Lenin dealt with the beginnings of processes that are now enormously developed. This is seen not only in the developed rapacity of Japan in the North of China and of Britain in the South. But also, on the other hand, in the development of "the proletariat as a progressive class." In the Soviet Union the victory of the proletariat has brought the liberation of a hundred nationalities. In China the future rests with the proletariat and peasantry of the Chinese Soviets which alone carry on the fight for liberation against the imperialists and what is now their own "corrupted" bourgeoisie.*]

THE juxtaposition of the above words would seem to be a paradox. Who doesn't know that Europe is progressive, and Asia backward? But there is a bitter truth in the words we have taken as title of the present article.

In civilised and progressive Europe, with its brilliantly developed technique, its rich, highly-varied culture and constitution, an historical moment has arrived in which, in its fear of the growing and increasingly strong proletariat, the bourgeoisie in command is giving its support to all backward, declining, mediæval elements. The dying bourgeoisie is uniting with all dead and dying forces in order to preserve its crumbling system of wage slavery.

In progressive Europe the bourgeoisie, supporting all backward elements, is in command. In our day Europe is progressive not *because* of the bourgeoisie, but *despite* it, for the proletariat alone is continually increasing its army of millions of fighters for a better future, it alone is preserving and spreading ruthless hatred for all backwardness, savagery, privilege, slavery, and the degradation of man by man.

In "progressive" Europe *only* the proletariat is a *progressive* class. But the living bourgeoisie is ready to resort to any savagery, bestiality and crime in order to defend the rotting capitalist slavery.

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And it is hardly possible to cite a more striking example of this rotting state of *all* the European bourgeoisie than its support of the *reaction* in Asia for the mercenary ends of the financiers and swindler capitalists.

Everywhere in Asia a mighty democratic movement is growing, extending, and increasing in strength. There the bourgeoisie is *still* marching with the people against reaction. *Hundreds* of millions of people are awakening to life, to light, to freedom. What exultation this world movement arouses in the hearts of all class-conscious workers, who know that the road to collectivism lies through democracy. With what sympathy for young Asia are all honest democrats imbued.

But " progressive " Europe ? It is pillaging China and assisting the enemies of democracy, the enemies of freedom in China !

Here is a simple, but instructive little story. The new Chinese loan has been concluded *against* the Chinese democracy : " Europe " is for Yuan Shi Kai,* who is preparing a military dictatorship. Why is it for him ? Because of an advantageous business transaction. The loan has been concluded for a sum of about 250 million roubles at a rate of 84 to par. This means that the bourgeoisie of " Europe " will *pay* the Chinese 210 millions, while it will take 225 million roubles from the public. So that in the course of a few weeks you get a pure profit of *fifteen million roubles !* And that in reality is a fine " pure " profit, isn't it ?

But supposing the Chinese people do not recognise the loan ? For there is a republic in China, and if the majority of those in the parliament are *against* the loan ?

Oh, then " progressive " Europe will begin to cry out about " civilisation," " order," " culture," and the " fatherland " ! Then it will move up the *cannon* and crush the republic of " backward " Asia in alliance with the adventurist, traitor and friend of reaction Yuan Shi Kai !

All in command in Europe, all the European bourgeoisie are in *alliance* with all the forces of reaction and mediævalism in China.

But on the other hand all youthful Asia, *i.e.*, the hundreds of millions of toilers in Asia, have a trustworthy ally in the form of the proletariat of all civilised countries. No force in the world can restrain its victory, which will free both the peoples of Europe and the peoples of Asia.

Pravda No. 113 (317) for May 18, 1913. (unsigned.)

* Yuan Shi Kai. First president of the Chinese Republic, 1912-1916. He first fought to save the Manchu dynasty, then sought to found a new dynasty in his own person. The Japanese intervention in 1916 checked his plans.

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COTTON AND THE LEFT

DEAR COMRADE,

While fully endorsing Comrade Rust's answer to the *Fascist Quarterly* article on "Cotton and the Left"* published in the November LABOUR MONTHLY, I would like to point out that certain arguments in the original article, which he has omitted to mention, are of some importance.

(1) In reply to the objection that the Mosley "plan" would only give work to 50 per cent. of the unemployed operatives, Raven Thomson says that "150,000 workers have left the industry since 1914." This is based on the following figures:

	No. of insured workers.	No. of employed workers.
1912 ..	—	621,000
1924 ..	572,000	—
1929 ..	555,000	—
1934 ..	467,000	365,000

If we assume full employment in 1912 this would mean that the number of workers employed had dropped by 255,000 of whom only 100,000 were actually unemployed. But it is notorious that the drop of 105,000 from 1924 to 1934 in the number of insured workers is caused, not by ex-spinners and weavers migrating to other industries, but by the *striking-off* of unemployed workers, especially married women, from the unemployment register. Of the remainder, a considerable number are piecers who have left the spinning-mill for various casual occupations, and who, although they soon fall out of employment again, no longer figure as cotton workers on the register.

(2) An even more brilliant piece of Fascist "reasoning" is Raven Thompson's explanation of what will happen to the displaced Indian workers. Losing their jobs "will not be of any hardship," because "most of them have only recently come from the land" and "many of them are only part-time workers" who "go back to the village for part of the year" [quotations from memory]. The blackshirt economist fails to point out that the Indian peasant goes to work for a starvation wage in the horrible mills of Bombay, not because he likes it, but in order to avoid starvation. An attempt to "create work" in Lancashire by destroying it in India would only drive the Indian workers back on to the land and so increase the impoverishment of the Indian peasantry. Such a policy, therefore, would eventually *reduce* the total sale of Lancashire cottons to India.

(3) Lastly, one may note the cynical suggestion that the Japanese should be allowed to recoup themselves for their exclusion from Empire markets by being allowed to "develop" North China. That such a policy would eventually lead to world war is not mentioned by the *Fascist Quarterly*.

It is important to answer these Fascist "arguments," not because they are important in themselves, but because they represent a frame of mind all too common among the Lancashire workers and middle class. Unfortunately very little is done in Lancashire to counteract this, and Comrade Rust's *Mosley and Lancashire*,† although excellent, is but a drop in the ocean. What is really needed is:

(1) A really comprehensive account of the present condition of the cotton industry, its causes and the way out (with special reference to the Soviet Union and Soviet Britain). This should be based on, and supplement Freda Utley's *Lancashire and the Far East*, and Joan Beauchamp's *British Imperialism in India*.

(2) That Freda Utley's *What's Wrong with the Cotton Trade* (C.P.G.B., 1930), which is the best pamphlet on the subject, should be brought up-to-date and re-issued for mass circulation.

(3) That the cotton policy and the anti-imperialist agitation of the C.P. should be linked up, instead of being kept in water-tight compartments as at present (a glaring example of this was the failure to develop any *broad* solidarity movement for the Bombay textile strikers in 1934). At present the majority of workers in Lancashire are hostile to the liberation of India, because they think they benefit from imperialism. The C.P. should show them that this is not the case, and that the exploitation of the colonial peasants and workers is a *direct cause* of unemployment at home.

(4) Adequate material on these lines should be published in the *Daily Worker*, which gives far less adequate treatment to cotton questions than in 1930-3. What is wanted is not merely strike notes, but analysis of the causes of the present situation and agitation for the revolutionary way out.

Yours fraternally,

SPARTACUS.

*See November issue of last year, p. 691-696. Copies of this issue can be had for 7d. post free from THE LABOUR MONTHLY, 7 John Street, London, W.C.1.

†1d. each, 1½d. post free, 7 John Street, W.C.1.

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE THREE GREAT CRISES.

This Final Crisis. Allen Hutt. Gollancz. pp. 288. 5s.

ALLEN HUTT'S thesis is that British capitalism has experienced three major crises, which came to a head in the 1840's, the 1880's and the 1930's.

In this well-arranged and well-informed book he makes us look at the last hundred years of British history from a Marxist point of view. (In so doing he reveals how pitiably little of such historical work we possess. There is perhaps no more urgent task before the Marxist writers, that the working-class movement is for the first time in its history beginning to develop, than such revaluations of British history.)

His first part is entitled " The Hungry Forties." It performs two functions. It gives an account of the Chartist movement, free from the distorting patronage, amounting to definite falsification, with which chartism has been covered by all its bourgeois and by most of its reformist historians. He makes us realise the greatness of Chartism as no one has done since the publication of that important, if unequal, book, Theodore Rothstein's " From Chartism to Labourism."

But Hutt performs an even more important function. He makes us understand how the British capitalist class not only conquered the Chartists—for this, in view of the Chartists' inevitable immaturity, was not difficult—but how they solved their objective economic difficulties. He makes us see what was the basis of the capitalist hey-day from 1850 to 1880.

These thirty golden years were, according to the capitalists, the epoch of free trade and free competition ; but as Hutt demonstrates, they were years of a Free Trade and a Free Competition based upon a natural monopoly. It was their natural monopoly of all the more skilled forms of manufacturing which enabled the British capitalists of the middle of the 19th century to be free traders, liberals and even Little Englanders.

Hutt goes on to show how the crisis of the 1880's developed when the natural monopoly of the British manufacturers was threatened by Germany, America and to a less extent by France. The crisis proved sufficient to re-create an anti-capitalist working-class movement, but it did not prove sufficient to destroy British capitalism. Before it could do that it was solved by the upward economic tendency which reappeared in the closing years of the century.

How did the British capitalists achieve this second success ? They did so, Hutt says, by substituting a new monopoly for their lost natural monopoly of almost every manufacturing trade. They substituted the artificial monopoly of a gigantic, semi-exclusive, imperial market. Before the menace of German, American, and later Japanese exports they retreated behind imperial bulwarks. Thus they were able to maintain the high semi-monopolist prices which they had always got for their exports.

In stressing so heavily the monopolistic basis of both of the solutions effected by the British governing class, Hutt has performed a great service ; for this is the key to British economic history in the 19th century. This is the explanation of the apparent ability of the British capitalists to defy the laws of capitalist development, to go on extracting surplus value in undiminished quantities whilst yet making relatively substantial concessions to the skilled workers. This fact, which has given some plausibility to the claim of every British capitalist economist that the law of motion of capitalism, as discovered by Marx, has been disproved by the development of British capitalism. The explanation is that Marx's law was " the law of motion " of a competitive capitalism, in which prices found their level automatically, in a free market. Marx was

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always careful to show how this law was modified by the intervention of any monopolistic element (as in the case of absolute rent).

The truth is that the British capitalists have managed to suspend the full rigours of the laws of capitalism's inner development simply and solely because of their possession, first of a natural, and then of an acquired, monopoly.

The British capitalist class still possess their imperialist monopoly, and they are still, therefore, able to maintain the substantial concessions which the working class has won. But they are only able to do so by maintaining their empire intact, and this involves the exclusion of every other capitalist class from the best markets of the world. And this, in turn, means war.

The third part of Hutt's book is devoted to the present situation of British capitalism. He shows admirably how the imperialist solution of the crisis of the eighties inevitably produced, *via* the war, the new crisis of the twentieth century. But the contemporary crisis of British capitalism is unlike the two previous ones in that it takes place in a fundamentally changed world. Not only have the imperialist rivals of Britain become incomparably more formidable, but also a sixth of the world has been lost to capitalist exploitation altogether. In such a situation, Hutt writes in his description of his book, British capitalism "certainly has a 'way out'—but only along the road of Fascism (of social and cultural decay, of barbarism and retrogression, that is to say), and its concomitant, War."

It is a great strength of Hutt's book that he never loses sight of the connection between the subjective and the objective factors of the situation. He never presents the problem as a question of whether or not capitalism will "collapse." For him it is always a question of whether the forces of revolution generated by the successive crises of capitalism will be capable of overthrowing it. Hutt says that British capitalism still has a way out. I suppose that in a sense he is right, but it is a way out that involves the death of, I should have thought, perhaps half of the population of this country. As he puts it:

> "The future of human society in this country now depends upon the speed with which the working class can solidly unite its forces, can be imbued with deep revolutionary understanding of the present issues, can be equipped with an organised vanguard, a revolutionary Party—a Party of an entirely new type."

One criticism. Every now and then Hutt seems to me to make exaggerated statements. Here is the worst example. On page 198 he says that the Incitement to Disaffection Act "out-Tsared the Tsar."

This may seem a small matter, but I believe that there is nothing which so alienates the unconverted reader as exaggerated statements of this sort. I feel that we ought all to be especially vigilant in eliminating them from our work.

JOHN STRACHEY.

THE COTTON INDUSTRY.

Wages and Labour in the Lancashire Cotton Spinning Industry. John Jewkes and F. M. Gray. Manchester University Press. 8s. 6d.

THIS book has arisen as a result of the post-war chaos of the Cotton Industry. The Manchester University Research Department having had funds placed at its disposal to help to find solutions to the many problems which have arisen from the chaos, deputed two of its assistants to thoroughly examine the spinning industry and to make recommendations as to the issues to be faced as a result of their observations.

It will be seen, therefore, that the book covers a wide field, but while many new and astonishing facts emerge from the author's investigations, nothing new is contributed to solve the industry's difficulties.

The main argument running through the book, stripped of its many fine phrases (inefficient mills to be shut down, production of standardised goods, altered conditions of labour and so on), is that the

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only solution to the post-war chaos, is the calling in the aid of that staunch friend of the employer, Rationalisation, and its twin brother Reorganisation.

The book gives an exhaustive analysis of the various Spinning Lists, which determine the rates of pay for various classes of work, criticises them as masterpieces of complication (which is true), and puts forward the idea of one Universal List to cover all districts, advocating, if this idea is too revolutionary, the adoption of the two main lists for the Oldham and Bolton areas respectively, the remaining lists (Ashton, Hyde, Preston and Blackburn) to be scrapped. Long wearying chapters are devoted to these lists, their origin, their peculiarities and their intricacies. We would point out, however, that far too much is made of these lists in the book.

The existence of the list wage system is a monument of Lancashire cotton capitalist anarchy, but nevertheless they record the tenacity of the working spinners in getting written down what shall be done and what shall not be done in a hundred years of struggle against famine, disease and death. And whilst it may be desirable now from the employers' point of view to alter the system, there will be no surrender of even one clause in any of the lists until something tangible offers.

In the chapter on wages (the income of the operative) the post-war phenomenon of earnings being lower than rates is examined. Prior to the war (for sixty years) the converse was the case, and the authors, after an exhaustive review of possible causes of this including the loss of touch through short time, changes in the efficiency of labour, the effect of constant changes of qualities, etc., come to the correct conclusion that " bad spinning " is the chief cause, allowing the above may be very minor contributory factors. The term " bad spinning " is the direct result of the employers' policy of using the nastiest, cheapest raw material obtainable, and afterwards browbeating the spinner and his assistants, the piecers, into attempting to turn out the finest quality yarn, which means the best quality cloths, from the rubbish. Consequently, the threads being spun are constantly breaking, causing the spinners to be always on the run, piecing broken ends. The result is a tremendous increase of work and worry and a depleted wage at the week-end.

What remedy do the authors offer? On page 29 they state:

> On the whole, therefore, the reversal in the post-war period of the long-established tendency for the earning of the spinners to rise above wage rates seems to be due not so much to a technical decline in the efficiency of the industry as to the loss of effort involved in the breakdown of the pre-war system of mass production of a standardised product. If this conclusion is correct it constitutes an argument, even in the interests of the operatives for some measure of control over the whole industry which would enable the inefficient mills to be shut down and demand concentrated upon the modern mills running full time in the production of standardised goods.

A statement which provokes a few questions. (1) Was the cause of the breakdown of the pre-war system of mass production of standard goods due to the fact that there were too many spindles? (2) Is it a fact that due to the decline in the industry 20 per cent. of the spindles have been closed down already, and if so, has the closing down of these spindles afforded one tittle of a solution to the problem? (3) Has not post-war experience shown clearly already that the system of production of standardised goods has gone from capitalist Lancashire for ever because the world monopoly went from Lancashire with the war? (4) Is it not true that those who were formerly customers of Lancashire can now be placed in the two categories of (*a*) competitors, and (*b*) customers, so impoverished that they cannot look at the products, let alone buy them? These questions supply a sufficient answer to the specious statement that closing " redundant " mills will solve any problem of the Lancashire workers. This " solution " will suit the employers, who are not concerned about running mills at all if *their* standard of life could be left untouched or better still increased,

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and would not be concerned if all the mills were declared redundant.

No. The closing of more mills is no solution. The trouble is that the spinning industry has passed its highest point of development under capitalist production. It is ironic and tragic that whilst mills are being broken up the Lancashire workers are in dire need of the goods they produce. The Indian workers and peasants who were great buyers of Lancashire goods before the war are to-day so bled white by British Imperialism, their own exploiters, and the princes and overlords, that they cannot afford any except the very crudest forms of clothing.

There are not too many spindles. The solution therefore lies in the freeing of the cotton workers from capitalist ownership and control, which when accomplished will free the colonial workers also. Then all the spindles in existence now will be needed, and more besides. In the meantime the cotton workers will resist with all their power the closing of more mills or any further attempts to increase unemployment and decrease wages. A spinner once the mill shuts down ceases to be a spinner. He must find a new trade, for which by virtue of his specialised calling he is ill-equipped. Unemployment for him is not an interlude, it is a tragedy. Lancashire is full of able, intelligent men and women, with whom the employers have dispensed, ready to take whatever offers. This is the consequence of the closing of mills policy, let the authors note.

A surprising omission in the book is the non-recognition of the effect of the terrific watering of capital that took place from 1920 to 1923. One would expect the analyses of wages and conditions of labour would show the effects on them of the plunderings of the bankers and city financiers. It is obvious that in mills where the capital has been multiplied five or six times that to make them pay a dividend would lead to onslaughts on the workers in all directions. Cheap cotton, scant repairs, wages attacks, cuts in staff, these are only a few of the methods adopted to make the mills what 99 spinners out of every hundred call a hell-hole. Professor G. W. Daniels, the Dean of the Faculty of Commerce and Administration at Manchester University, mentions in his Introduction to the book that members of the Research Section are engaged on investigations of other current problems. Possibly, when the results of these investigations are published, some light may be thrown on the manœuvres of these financial gangsters during the years above mentioned.

The Piecer Problem

The problem of the piecers is dealt with at length and suggestions to solve it are put forward. They are an extension of the system of joiner-minding and the use of girls and women as piecers.

The piecer problem is, briefly, that men as piecers have the status and pay of youths. Their only hope if they remain in the industry is to get promotion to spinning, and this contingency is so remote that not one in ten will ever get this promotion. The book gives figures which are very illuminating. Average wages for piecers: Oldham 28s., Bolton 26s. 11d., Ashton 27s. 4d., Rochdale 30s. 6d. In each of the towns mentioned the P.A.C. scale is 28s. for man, wife and child.

To determine the average ages of piecers inquiries were made of 2,780 big piecers in seven Lancashire towns. Of the total 54 per cent. were above 24 years of age, 25 per cent. above 28 years, and 16 per cent. above 31 years. Of the cited cases 30 per cent. were married, 12 per cent. had children, and 3 per cent. had two or more children.

A criterion of the lack of interest in this blind alley occupation of the youth is shown by the following figures of the Union of the Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes' examination scripts worked in cotton spinning courses: year 1923, 2,951 students; 1929, 2,604 students; 1934, 792 students. The City and Guilds of London Institute similar examination shows for 1923, 356 students, and 1934,

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184 students. This shows that the youth are fully alive to the dead end character of the job and are not wasting time.

With respect to the recommendation of the authors for an extension of joiner-minding, meaning the spinner's and the big piecer's wages divided, the spinner would never consent to it as it will mean a cut of £1 to £1 10s. at least. As to the suggestion of the introduction of girls as piecers, the authors state there are objections to this on social grounds as the men change clothes at the machines, no dressing rooms being provided. The suggestion is fatuous in any case apart from the social grounds objection. The wages of a little piecer (Bolton) is 15s. per week. Do the authors seriously suggest that this blind alley job is enough for a girl or young woman to live on? Particularly as no prospect is offered of the worker ever getting higher. It is merely getting out of one difficulty to step into a greater. One can only suppose that the authors expect that all the women piecers will in due course marry the joiner-minders and see that the supply is maintained. But it is the old Lancashire employer's method of looking to cheap female labour to solve a difficulty.

It is very strange that in all the pros and cons that are written of the piecer problem, it never occurs to the authors to advocate a living wage for the piecers. It is because then they would be asking the employer to supply the solution? And they are afraid of the old parrot cry of the industry being almost bankrupt? If the authors think this, they have only to study the high cost of management and capital charges to see whether living wages can be paid. From this source alone it is possible to pay all the piecers a substantial rise in wages. This is the *only solution* to the piecer problem, and all other methods however ingeniously worked out are merely idle speculation.

The status of the piecer in the Union is touched upon, and it is brought out that the piecers while being compelled to be members of the Spinners' Union, have no rights to attend meetings and can only vote in case of a strike or a lockout. The authors suggest that all piecers be given equal rights in the Union at the age of 21. The suggestion is sound and one that the Spinners' Union should take note of. In fact, the whole question of the piecers—as they are—subject to two employers—the employer and the spinner (the spinner pays their wages), merits an inquiry by the Trades Union Congress, and from this a lead given to improve their conditions. Some examination should be made of the Trade Union officials' attitude to the piecers, and their resistance to the piecers' rights as trade unionists, broken down.

Enough has been said to show that this book is important. Every reader (particularly in the spinning towns should get it if he can afford 8s. 6d. to buy it, or should read it in his local library. The facts, figures and information given have only been glanced at in this review, and to have these at one's service will be very valuable both in the immediate struggles and for those that are so obviously looming ahead. The book deals with the origins and development of the Trade Unions, and examines them also. Ring-spinning and its supercession of mule-spinning is reviewed with a multitude of facts and figures concerning both.

As a whole, the book offers no solution to the problems of the workers, in fact the arguments are obviously made to assist the employer, but to know the employer's arguments is to meet and defeat them, and that is the job of every militant. Therefore the book must be read.

H. S.

AN EDUCATION CONTRAST.

Schools at the Cross-roads. Martin Lawrence. 6d.

THIS pamphlet, by the Educational Workers' International, consists of three sections, on "English Schools in the Crisis," "Education under Fascism," and "Education in the Soviet Union."

The first section deals with the savage economy cuts of the National Government

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and their effect in crippling the educational services and preventing the full development of the young generation. The paper on Fascist Education tells of the perversion of culture, the militarisation of educational institutions, the repression of teachers' rights and organisations and curtailments of expenditure far greater than those in this country.

Quotations from statements by Fascist leaders or newspapers reveal in its sharpest form the capitalist attitude to education. *Mikhon*, a Japanese Fascist journal, says: "We must rid the school of the spirit of free inquiry." Herr Schwemm, in the *Prussian Teachers' Gazette* for May, 1934, says: "The task of the German teacher is not to give a complete education, but to make fighters out of German youth."

In vivid contrast to this, R. Bishop's paper on Soviet Education describes the freedom and ceaseless expansion of cultural activity in the U.S.S.R.; how the absence of unemployment removes the necessity for restrictions and economies, and how there has thus arisen "not an abstract education, but an education that is intimately bound up with their life and well-being."

Besides this comparison of Soviet and capitalist education, the pamphlet outlines a series of steps that can be taken in Britain to defend education.

A. F. B.

THE MAN AT THE WHEEL.

Stalin, a New World seen through one man. By Henri Barbusse. (John Lane, The Bodley Head.) 12s. 6d.

A GREAT revolutionary leader, a great revolution, a great working-class State, such are the subject matter with which a great writer deals in this book. Its title indicates clearly that Barbusse in writing it had no intention of writing just an ordinary biography of Stalin, but rather of drawing the synthesis of the development of the Bolshevik Party before the Revolution of 1917 and of its work since, with the development of the man who is now at the helm of this great Party and the workers' State it has built.

Already in his book *Zola* Barbusse had shown with what thoroughness and power he could give us the living portrait, or rather film, of a man. He does this, without dwelling on the many and unimportant details which occur during a lifetime, but at the same time he gives the necessary details which bring life to the picture being painted, which brings out the real significance of the man's work, giving the true perspective of his achievements.

Just as Barbusse was able to present us with such a comprehensive study of Zola because he was not writing from an ivory tower, but understood the subject, the man, the *oeuvre* of the great protagonist of the school of realist writers, so once again when Barbusse gives us his last work, one could almost say his political testament, he does it with a deep understanding of his subject matter, with his thoroughness, with his profound love of the truth and hatred of exaggeration, and at the same time with his unflinching admiration of the Soviet Union, its Party and its leaders, and his great devotion to the working-class and Socialism.

Conscious of the criticism which would be levelled against him that "If you were to say as many bad things about Russia as you say good things, we might believe you . . . whilst you are prejudiced and make a panegyric," Barbusse replies to this criticism in his book, replies to it to-day from his tomb in the Père Lachaise.

> Quite right. But it is only the truth that makes it panegyric. We have not invented any argument.
>
> The prejudiced man is one who, being a servant of a bastard and mediocre conception of capitalist Republicanism does not see the breadth and depth of the creative originality put into the activities over there. He does not place the Soviet facts into their true settings of time and space, into their world and historic settings and in their repercussions upon the human race. He is not telling the truth. (p. 225.)

Barbusse first introduces us to Stalin standing on the top of Lenin's mausoleum. That man, "whether you love or hate

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this nation which occupies one-sixth of the world's surface, that is the man who is at the head of it. . . . He is a man of iron. The name by which he is known describes it: the word Stalin means 'steel' in Russian. He is as strong and yet as flexible as steel." (pp. vi. and 289.)

Stalin started his revolutionary activities in the Tiflis Seminary and when expelled for his activities in 1898 "he went, without a backward glance, straight over to the workers." His work for the revolutionary cause, his "natural simplicity, his complete indifference to the conditions of personal life, his strength of character and his knowledge, which even at that time was remarkable, gave him authority, called people's attention to him and kept it there. The Tiflis workers called him 'our Sosso.'" (p. 11.)

Living most of the time in illegality, exiled to Siberia on three occasions (from which he managed to escape each time), Stalin soon became a "faithful disciple of Lenin." Until Lenin's death Stalin was his right hand man, never drifting apart from him either to the right or to the left.

And so Barbusse takes us through the life of this great leader showing the tremendous part he played during the Civil War in reorganising the Red Army on the various fronts and organising the food supplies. Then as People's Commissar for Nationalities where he was mainly responsible for working out the policy which "for the first time in history, put forward a reasonable and serious solution of this age-old antagonism all over the planet, a logical formula which combined the two irreducible essentials, national individuality and practical federation, and placed patriotism not *against* but *in* Socialism." (p. 101.)

After the death of Lenin it was Stalin who guided the Bolshevik Party in the tremendous task of constructing Socialism in one-sixth of the world; in successfully dealing with the peasant question; in the struggle against Trotsky and the opportunists both of the left and the right, watching "more jealously than ever over the unimpaired greatness of Leninism, which he had saved from intrigue at a moment when the great experiment of liberty, which had never ceased to make progress, had nevertheless not yet quite reached its full maturity; at a period at which the Soviet Revolutionaries and the proletariat were eagerly yet slowly giving life to the monumental new organism by a self-sacrifice comparable to a transfusion of blood." (p. 201.)

Just a word before concluding on the translation. While one would not for a moment suggest that the translator is not competent, or that from a literary point of view he is not very able, one has to regret that his knowledge of political phraseology and the significance of the words used is not on the same level, a fault which as a matter of fact is not peculiar to this translation, but to be found in the translation of most of Barbusse's books in recent years.

At the same time we regret that this book which was published in France at 12 and 15 francs (3s. 2d. and 4s.), should be published in this country at the practically prohibitive price of 12s. 6d. It is to be hoped that the publishers will see their way clear in the very near future to get out a revised and much cheaper edition, so that it has the wide sale which it undoubtedly merits.

Despite errors in translation and the price, Barbusse's *Stalin* should be read by all who are interested in Communism in the Soviet Union and in "the man at the wheel." The simplicity and clarity with which these complex questions are dealt with clearly indicate that only Barbusse could have tackled this "very serious undertaking" in which "documents crowded in upon one another and accumulated," and which has been solved not simply by hewing "one's way, stroke by stroke, through this impassioned, still living and appealing encyclopædia of events" (p. ix.), but by carving a monumental literary and political work.

W. ZAK.

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"THEY MIGHT BE US"

Virgin Soil Upturned. Mikhail Sholokhov. Putnam. pp. —. 7s. 6d.

A FAVOURITE method of counter-Soviet propaganda is the trick of saying: "But surely you don't believe all those fairy-tale statistics, those accounts of everything working so perfectly? Now if they would admit to a failure every now and then, I might believe in Communism." Sholokhov's novel, *Virgin Soil Upturned*, can certainly not be dismissed as a fairy tale. The *Saturday Review* can even recommend it as comfortable reading for British Fascists.

"*This is the story of the attempt to 'collectivise' the Don Cossacks, and here again the artist in Sholokhov triumphs over the Soviet propagandist, for not only are we presented with a wonderfully sympathetic picture of the Cossack's love for their land and their fierce determination to acquire it for themselves, but the absurdities of the whole Soviet mechanising system and the stupidities of its officials are relentlessly exposed with an audacity that is almost incredible.*"

But though British Fascism makes this gallant attempt to grasp the nettle unstung by standing on its head to do so, the civilised reader will recognise in *Virgin Soil Upturned* neither direct propaganda nor exposure, but merely the look of truth. Those who know anything of agriculture know that in any country and under any conditions a harvest is tantamount to a warfare. We have not yet trained nature, as we have cows, to stand still and be milked. *Virgin Soil Upturned* recounts the sowing not only of a grain harvest but of a social harvest, the sowing of the idea of collectivisation in the soil, so rich to produce at once both wheat and tares, of the rustic mind; it tells of a struggle against sabotage, misrepresentation, White intrigue, as well as against such usual adversaries as weather and weevil.

This book is remarkable on many counts; for richness of material, for vitality, and for its objectivity. But *Virgin Soil Upturned* is remarkable most of all for its understanding of the rural mind. Sholokhov's peasants are portrayed, not from the viewpoint of Tolstoi who, whether describing peasant as clod-hopper or Holy One, never cast off the land-capitalist fallacy that the peasant is a separate being—a species, but as workers peculiarly affected by peculiar conditions, weathered, as it were by a trade at once arduous and subtle, and emotionally subject to the stimulus inherent in the primitive business of getting food from earth. Whether the workers in *Virgin Soil Upturned* rage against the collective farm or for it, their profoundest passion is still that impulse to tend the feeding earth, to sow and to reap; ultimately, they are for or against collectivisation as they consider it an abettor or an impediment to this; and the directing and harnessing of this passion to the service of the collective is the basic theme of the whole book.

One interesting result of Sholokhov's understanding of the peasant mind is that his peasants surpass nationality. Readers of Russian fiction who have learned to dread the moujik as a high-tide bore need have no dread of him in *Virgin Soil Upturned*. Other readers, not so sophisticated, though in fiction with a rural theme quite as critical—agricultural workers who have read this book, have agreed in this one comment: "The people are so life-like. They might be us, here."

SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER.

THE BACKGROUND TO THE SINO-JAPANESE CONFLICT

The Problem of the Far East. Sobei Mogi and H. Vere Redman. Gollancz Ltd. 5s.

THE problem of the Far East is not merely the problem of those countries situated in the Far East, but of the whole world. The starting point of the next great war may occur not in Europe, but in the Far East.

The Far East has long been regarded by the imperialist countries of the world as a profitable source of supply of raw

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materials, exploitation of labour and consumption of manufactured goods. After Japan became an imperialist country in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Far East was no longer the place for the exploitation of western imperialist countries alone.

Japan became a strong rival of the western powers ; therefore, the problem of the Far East has become more complicated and serious.

Since the problem of the Far East has become more complicated and serious, the people of the world have begun to focus their eyes upon it.

Hitherto, books dealing with these problems have been published in various languages in large numbers, but we can hardly find a book which is written in a fair and unbiassed manner.

"The Problem of the Far East" is in this book discussed by liberal-minded people satisfactorily, both because of its objective outlook and its comprehensive contents. It consists of three parts ; the first part dealing with modern Japan, which is composed of six chapters starting with the historical survey of Japan, political institutions, economic institutions, labour and socialist movement and social conditions, down to the last, the problem of modern Japan.

The second part, "Modern China," consists of a similar series like the first part. The last section, "International Relations in the Far East," with four chapters starts with the relation between Japan and China, then deals with international relations in the Far East, international relations between the Far Eastern countries and the Western world, down to the last, "The Problem of the Far East."

This book fully shows not only the political and economic situation of both countries, Japan and China, at the present time, but also brings out the imperialist oppression of China and the competitive struggle between the imperialist countries. The book is well written, and can rank as an elementary book for those people who are ignorant of the problems of the Far East.

A word or two should be added here. The authors have not treated the second part of the book (Modern China) as well as the first part (Modern Japan). They have either missed the points which require to be mentioned, or they incorrectly describe the facts. For instance, firstly the authors have mentioned rarely or not at all the anti-imperialist movement among the masses of the Chinese people, especially since the invasion of Manchuria by Japanese imperialism on September 18, 1931 ; secondly, the Chinese revolution is not only an agricultural revolution—the Republic of Soviet China is not only representative of the agricultural revolution. The character of the Chinese revolution to-day is of a bourgeois-democratic nature which comprises anti-imperialism and the agricultural revolution—and the Republic of the Chinese Soviets represents both these movements. Thirdly, the authors state on pp. 281-282 : "Sex equality has never existed in Chinese society and since the female has been consistently subordinate to the male, no social co-operation can readily exist between them, as this fundamental psychology cannot be easily changed." But this is not the fact as it exists in those territories comprising the Chinese Soviet Republic. Lastly, with regard to the influence of Confucianism in China to-day, it is weakening, especially in the Soviet districts. It has lost a great deal of influence among the Chinese people, especially the younger generation compared with twenty years or so ago.

On the whole the book is interesting and gives an intelligent and fairly comprehensive account of the problems of the Far East to-day.

W. CHANG.

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PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

Unity Against the National Government. Harry Pollitt. (C.P.G.B., 16 King Street, W.C.2.) 31 pp. 1d.

The Final Crisis. Allen Hutt. (Gollancz.) 288 pp. 6s.

The White Sea Canal. Thirty-four Soviet authors. (John Lane.) 356 pp. 15s.

My Life of Revolt. David Kirkwood, M.P. (George Harrap.) 270 pp. 10s. 6d.

Get Them Work. James Mulligan, K.C. (Geo. Barber and Sons.) 33 pp. 3s. 6d.

Where Shakespeare Stood. Donald Morrow. (Casanova Press, Milwaukee, U.S.A.) 89 pp. $1.00.

Soviet China. Egon Erwin Kisch. (John Lane.) 279 pp. 8s. 6d.

*Spain—October—*1934. A Pictorial History. Relief Committee for Victims of Fascism. 1s. 1 Litchfield Street, London, W.C.2. All proceeds to be devoted to relief work among the victims of the repression in Spain.

Soviet Communism : A New Civilisation ? 2 vols. Sidney and Beatrice Webb. (Longmans.) 1,174 pp. 30s.

Down But not Out. Will Y. Darling. (Allen & Unwin.) 215 pp. 5s.

The Teachers' International Review : November, 1935. Vol. 1, No. 2. 331 High Road, Chiswick, W.4.

It Can Happen Here. Active Anti-Semitism in Los Angeles. Carey McWilliams. (American League Against War and Fascism.) 31 pp. 3d.

The Two Classes. Who Owns the National Wealth ? (Labour Research Department.) 21 pp. 2d.

The National Government and Housing. (Labour Research Department.) 16 pp. 2d.

The National Government and Subsidies. (Labour Research Department.) 15 pp. 1d.

Problems of Soviet Literature. Being the reports of Maxim Gorky, Karl Radek, N. Bukharin, and others at the Soviet Writers' Congress. (Martin Lawrence.) 279 pp. 3s. 6d.

Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution. V. I. Lenin. (Martin Lawrence.) 127 pp. 1s. 6d.

UP WITH THE CIRCULATION !

We take this opportunity of thanking all those readers who responded so well to our appeal for names of friends to whom we could send specimen copies. Every person whose name was so submitted has been sent a specimen copy of the LABOUR MONTHLY. We are eager for more. This is a way in which we can boost our circulation in 1936. It is a way in which many more readers can help. Use the form enclosed with each December copy, fill it with names of likely readers, and get it to us right away.

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The Financial Appeal

THIS month, as you will have noticed, the Editor of THE LABOUR MONTHLY considers that the publication of the Webb's book such an important event as to merit devoting the whole of his customary Notes of the Month to it under the title of " A Landmark of the British Labour Movement."

This is the opportunity that you have been waiting for. If you have already given a donation to the Debt Fund you can approach fellow-readers who have not yet, and point out to them that they can well mark their appreciation of this event by helping to reduce that Fund.

Those who read this Appeal last month will notice that we have only just scraped through in managing to pass the £300 mark that we then set ourselves to collect, but at the same time they will notice that the list this month is very meagre. This means that together with the set-back last month, we have not been able to prevent an accumulation in our total debt owing to the fact that the monthly guarantee fund of just over £18 is not sufficient to cover the £28 monthly deficit.

Nevertheless, to have collected £300 to pay off the original total debt of £480 is itself an achievement, itself a landmark.

Begin this new year by filling in either of the forms overleaf and see that the Debt is finally cleared before the summer and the future of THE LABOUR MONTHLY assured.

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